

# The SMART SET

*Edited by*  
George Jean Nathan  
and  
H.L. Mencken.



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- 108 How to Develop a Healthy Mind.
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- 113 Proverbs of England.
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- 169 Shall Church Property Be Taxed? Debate.
- 171 Has Life Any Meaning? Debate.

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# Contents

MOONS . . . . .	David Morton . . . . .	3
A GALLERY OF SINGLE WOMEN . . . . .	Philip Owen . . . . .	4
THE CONFIDANTE [ <i>complete novelette</i> ] . . . . .	Pauline Brooks and W. Adolphe Roberts . . . . .	5
THE WIFE OF A MAN OF GOD . . . . .	Kenneth Fuessle . . . . .	31
WAIT AWHILE . . . . .	Jeannette Marks . . . . .	40
REPÉTITION GÉNÉRALE . . . . .	George Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken . . . . .	41
A REAL WOMANLY WOMAN . . . . .	W. C. Wilber . . . . .	49
OPHELIA . . . . .	Elinor Wyllie . . . . .	55
THE RED GODS AND MR. NORTON . . . . .	Marion Randall Parsons . . . . .	57
WHITE ELEPHANTS [ <i>one-act play</i> ] . . . . .	Kenyon Nicholson . . . . .	63
THE VAMP . . . . .	Mabel McElliott . . . . .	75
THE GIPSY . . . . .	A. Newberry Choyce . . . . .	78
ROSE DE NUIT [ <i>essay</i> ] . . . . .	Reginald Wright Kauffman . . . . .	79
ATTHAN DANCES . . . . .	George Sterling . . . . .	87
THE BEQUEST . . . . .	Paul Tanaquil . . . . .	88
A FREEWOMAN . . . . .	Helen Woljeska . . . . .	89
MINNIE . . . . .	Edwin H. Blanchard . . . . .	91
HER FIRST HALLELUJAH . . . . .	Marion Strobel . . . . .	101
DANCING DAYS . . . . .	Amanda Benjamin Hall . . . . .	107
THE LEGACY . . . . .	John Towner Frederick . . . . .	119
CORDITE FOR CONCERTS . . . . .	Carl Van Vechten . . . . .	127
IN DEFENSE OF THE THEATRE . . . . .	George Jean Nathan . . . . .	131
NOTES ON BOOKS . . . . .	H. L. Mencken . . . . .	138

AND

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# SOME OF THE AIMS OF *The Smart Set*

1. To discover new American authors as they emerge, and to give them their first chance to reach an intelligent and sophisticated audience.

But mere newness is not an end in itself. *The Smart Set* avoids the childish "daring" of Greenwich Village just as rigorously as it avoids the stodginess of the New England school and the banality of the best-sellers. Its typical authors are those who are free from hampering tradition and yet full of sound ability: Eugene O'Neill, F. Scott Fitzgerald, James Branch Cabell, Sherwood Anderson, Willa S. Cather.

2. To present the point of view of the civilized minority.

Nine times out of ten this point of view is sharply opposed to the prevailing crazes of the mob—in the fine arts, in religion, in politics and in the conduct of life. *The Smart Set* is a refuge for the reader who is tired of newspapers, professors, preachers, politicians and uplifters. It preaches no dogmas of its own. Its tone is simply that of enlightened skepticism.

3. To introduce the best foreign authors to America.

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4. To leaven the national literature with wit and humor.

*The Smart Set* does not appeal to persons who take life too seriously. It has room every month for plenty of humor, and even for some buffoonery. The ponderous note is the one thing you will never find in it.

5. To encourage sound poetry.

At a time when all the other American magazines were full of *vers libre*, most of it dead as soon as it was printed, *The Smart Set* remained faithful to the lyric. It has printed more sound verse during the past seven years than all the poetry magazines taken together.

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*One of the leading features of the next number will be a striking and unusual novelette by the young American, Richmond Brooks Barrett, entitled "The Steward of God." Another feature will be John Macy's latest essay, "Rum, Reading and Rebellion."*

Vol. LXVI

OCTOBER, 1921

No. 2

# The SMART SET

*The  
Aristocrat  
Among  
Magazines*



## Moons

*By David Morton*

SOME moons the world can nevermore forget,  
Whose nights are one with many a shining name:  
The moons of Avalon are silver yet,  
Where towers wear their moonlit, haunting fame.  
And shadows laced on pillared porticoes,  
When moons were over Athens in the Spring,  
Will be remembered when the last moon goes,  
A dark, abandoned and forgotten thing.

On nights like this, beyond the solemn hill,  
Tall towns lift up their turrets to the moon,  
In this old moving radiance, haunted still,  
With what had been their golden bale or boon,—  
With storied names and dim, blue streets to stray,  
As when their moon went by the selfsame way.



# A Gallery of Single Women

*By Philip Owen*

**B**ACHELOR GIRLS, tailored with expensive simplicity, stepping with a thirty-inch stride, talking about the fun of living one's own life. . . . Women of thirty-two, perpetually in ambush, not particular about the victim so long as there is one. . . . Maiden ladies, acetic in their virginity, and suspicious of everything that happens on spring evenings. . . . Plump girls with several chins, despairing publicly over their inability to grow up. . . . Pious sisters, reading themselves into the Canticle of Canticles, and preparing themselves for the Everlasting Honeymoon. . . . Chronic wallflowers, visiting their married sisters and taking it out on the nieces and nephews. . . . Faded toasts of the town, turning over old letters

and wishing they hadn't waited so long. . . . Hardened veterans, kittenish after seven minutes' acquaintance, and eternally in fear of being compromised. . . . Prognathous Amazons, who shudder at the mention of blood, and cling to your arm while passing the cow pasture. . . . Fluffy things who know six different ways of making fudge, and who are unable to keep references to their domesticity out of the conversation. . . . Mythical figures, smiling a brave twisted smile, and keeping the faith with dear Willie, who departed this life eighteen years ago next March. . . . Plain old maids, keeping their lips tightly sealed, and regarding the world with reserve.



**Y**OU can say anything of the character of a man with imagination—and never be wrong.



**L**OVE is being able to discriminate between the false and the real, and choosing the false.



**M**EN like what they admire, but women can always admire what they like.

# The Confidante

[*A Complete Novelette*]

By Pauline Brooks and W. Adolphe Roberts

## CHAPTER I

**I**N frowning abstraction, Hugh Brent rolled a cigarette. He was perplexed and uncertain. His perplexity did not intrigue his imagination; it merely irritated and aroused his obstinacy.

His face was dark-skinned and lean, with high cheek bones and irregular, but harmonious, features. It gave an instant impression of physical vitality, as did his muscular, tightly-knit frame. He suggested outdoor activities, yet a large part of his life was given to a profession—patent law—which demanded a high degree of concentration and training. He was only thirty-two, but he had a record of brilliant achievement, indicating still more brilliant promise.

He raised his head and flashed a challenge to the woman whose serene gray eyes watched him from under lowered lids.

"Isn't it rather late," he said coldly, "to be concerned about the prattle of a lot of silly women?"

Edith Pelham met his glance with a more open gaze. There was a smile in her eyes, but back of the smile was a deep sadness. He did not observe the sadness and the smile seemed to him incongruous.

"Hugh, dear," she answered gently, "there's a beginning to all things—just as there's an end," she added, with a quiet significance that made him suddenly self-conscious.

What did she mean? he pondered. There was no end, so far as his love

for her was concerned. Did she doubt it? Did she think he was tired of her? The prompt self-justification was an accusation; he was aware of that, if a little vaguely.

"Oh, you women!" he said, in bitter generalization. "You start a thing and then you lose your nerve."

He was following her original lead. Not for a second would he accept any covert meaning in her reference to all things having an end. "If our world—your friends, to be specific—have been absolutely on your side ever since you and Pelham separated, and if they accepted my devotion to you—our—er—affair, two years ago, why should they begin to criticize you now, I'd like to know?"

Edith threw away her cigarette and took up some knitting. It was easier to be casual when one's hands were busy.

"I suppose," she explained slowly, "our—er—affair has gone on long enough to arouse their—speculation," she hesitated slightly over the word—"and not long enough for them to take it for granted."

Brent got up and walked to the wide casement window and back to the lounge before he answered her. His eyes roved restlessly over the sun-coloured walls of the long, low-ceilinged room, with here and there a soft-toned Japanese print or embroidered hanging.

Half consciously, he absorbed the charm of the room in which he had spent so many hours in the two years that had gone. Old pieces of mahogany

gave him silent greeting with their warmth of colour; rare bits of brass or copper from Russia or the Far East caught the afternoon sunlight and brightened his sombre gaze; long rows of books spoke to him of the deep mental sympathy between him and the woman sitting on the low couch. The song music on the piano rack brought to him an echo of the voice he had loved. The very rugs under his feet seemed to remind him of the yielding quality in Edith's strength.

His eyes rested on the coil of red-brown hair near the nape of her white neck. How happy they had been in their love, in spite—perhaps because—of its inhibitions! And now she was going to put an end to it all! . . . Was she sincere? Was it really because she shrank from the annoyances of gossip, or was she growing tired? His flying thoughts drew up suddenly before the word . . . tired. Was the freshness gone a little? There was no one else—he knew that, and felt no pang of jealousy. After all, they had been together a lot . . . it might have been better not to have run a willing horse. . . .

Again his thoughts entangled themselves in words. Why did so trite a metaphor suggest itself in connection with their love? But as to the idea . . . perhaps, for a time—for both of them—a spiritual freedom that love such as theirs seemed unable to attain . . . ? Then, later, with gossip lulled and a renewed zeal for the old relationship . . . ?

He sauntered to the lounge and sat down, lighting a fresh cigarette.

"The gods preserve us, my dear girl, from an affair that anyone could 'take for granted.'"

"Least of all ourselves," she said quickly, darting a look at him.

"That's one of the drawbacks to marriage," he replied, frowning at his feet. "There's too infernally much taken for granted."

"Yes, that's *one* of the drawbacks. I could mention a few others." She smiled at him, that whimsical smile of hers which always charmed him. He

had missed it, he realized, during the hour of their serious chat.

"You had a rare opportunity to gauge the drawbacks in marriage." Brent's lips tightened as he spoke.

"Oh, my experience didn't run the gamut by any means!" she said quietly. "Harry was never abusive—physically—even when drinking, and he was generous with money."

"But you suffered tortures from his mental cruelty. It must have been unspeakable when he was drunk."

"It was," she agreed, staring at the fire. "You see, my poor wits couldn't cope with his irony, and in his cruder moods he would insult me with ridicule or suspicion, everything dear to me—ideals, friends, even my own honesty of thought and action. It used to leave me weak with pain and rage."

Brent looked at her with puzzled eyes.

"Do you know, Edith, I can never understand why a woman gives a damn what a man says or does—barring physical violence—if she doesn't love him. Little a man cares when he's stopped loving a woman!"

She gave a short laugh that held a touch of scorn.

"Merely a difference in sex, my dear. A man may walk out of a house any time, day or night, for one thing. And perhaps we women are more sensitive. A man can make a woman quite wretched whether she loves him or not. Possibly, after all, we're bigger egotists."

"It has always been beyond me why you stuck it out for four years," Brent pursued with unsmiling eyes.

"Because it took me all that time to realize that my nature was being poisoned. But he was too clever for me even then. I shall never forget his smile when I said I wanted to leave him, and he told me all his plans were made to go abroad without me, and that his provision for me would protect him from any attack I might try to make."

"Damn him!" said Brent, as he had said often before. "He knew you couldn't work the incompatibility stunt

anywhere, even in France or Reno, without his collusion, and he's too yellow to give you that satisfaction. And you say women—”

“No chance of that. Harry is neither romantic enough nor vulgar enough to have any sort of entanglement.”

Brent laughed. “An amusing generalization, sweetheart, but, as some Frenchman said, like all generalizations, even this one, it is untrue.”

As she smiled a little sadly, he grew sombre and added:

“So you still think there's nothing to do?”

“Not now. Perhaps then, if I'd been persistent—but I've been brought up in dread of scandal, and to be utterly incompetent. So I followed the lines of least resistance, and was thankful merely to be free of his presence. When you came along, dear, I'd never have had the *sang froid* to defy conventions if people hadn't been so eager to ignore or condone what they could only guess at. And, do you know, I've often thought that it wasn't so much pity for me as self pity for all they had endured from Harry's evil temper and tongue! But, as to the guessing—it is becoming a bit too accurate.”

Brent suddenly leaned toward her and drew one of her hands away from her knitting.

“Edith, old girl, do you suppose, if we'd been able to marry, that we'd have been bowled over in the end by that 'take it for granted' evil in marriage?”

She let her hand rest in his, but her eyes fixed themselves on the burning log in the fireplace. The pure outline of her profile told him nothing.

“I don't know,” she said dreamily. “If we could have married, perhaps we would never have felt what we have for each other.”

“Edith!” He drew closer to her. “For God's sake, don't be cynical on that subject. It would be more to the point if you said that if we had married, you wouldn't have been able to dismiss me quite so easily as you are doing today.”

She turned her face to him and her

lips went into a gay little smile. That it was a forced one he did not perceive.

“Easily, did you say, dear? That rather puts it up to you, doesn't it?”

“Up to me! Very well, then I won't give you up.”

He seized her in his arms and kissed her with a swift flare of passion. For the moment he forgot his philosophic acceptance of the situation; forgot his vague reflections relating to spiritual freedom. He was aware only that he loved the woman in his arms and that his passion for her had not cooled.

Edith yielded to his mood and to her own joy in it for the few seconds before she realized that it was merely a mood. That she could, even briefly, have forgotten her resolve or the motive that impelled it, made her struggle out of his arms and to her feet.

Slowly, with surprise and genuine distress darkening his eyes, he stood up and stared at her. She was only two inches shorter than he and their glances met almost on a level. Her hair, where it curled around her face, was loosened; her eyes were brilliant with an emotion which he did not understand; and her red, mobile lips were parted and moist from his kisses. Her breath came unevenly.

“You musn't—kiss me—like that—again,” she said brokenly. “You must accept my compromise, or I shall not see you at all.”

There was no doubt of her purpose, however confused he might be as to her motive.

“And your compromise? It means that I may see you occasionally?”

“Of course,” she replied eagerly. “Twice a week, if you like. In the late afternoons. Here, or we can walk.”

“Why not in the evenings?”

She hesitated and her glance left his face. “I chose this afternoon for what I had to say because I knew I would find it harder to—to make you leave me—in the evening.”

He understood, and with the understanding came again an impulse to take her in his arms. But he merely said:

“Then we part as friends?”

"Oh, yes!" She stepped closer to him and put her hand on his arm. "Friends, whatever happens, Hugh. We have been too much to each other ever to lose that. Promise me, dear, that you'll come to me always for whatever friendship can give—affection, sympathy, understanding."

He heard the note of sincerity in her voice, and in her eyes he read a frank appeal which, with masculine clumsiness, he essayed to answer.

"I promise, old girl."

He did not try to kiss her, but he put his hand over hers on his arm.

A sudden twinge of heartache left her pale, and the hand under his trembled. With what facile complaisance he had accepted her compromise—friendship! But she forced a quick smile.

"I want you to have a good time, old dear—girls and all that. You've been tied to my apron-strings a long time, you know."

He stared at her rather blankly. "A man can't jump from an affair like ours into 'all that,' as you call it."

"Oh, you men!"

She did not question his sincerity, for although popular with men, with women he was inclined to an absentmindedness which was far from flattering. Only an occasional woman interested him, but on those rare occasions he could please and appeal without conscious effort. His affairs, therefore, were infrequent, but prone to be intense. She gave him a warm smile, and added:

"Well, anyway, you're to make me your confidante, remember. I'll give you good advice and I'll try not to be jealous. Your *confidante*, don't forget, Hugh! Now you must go, dear. Some women are coming for tea, and you don't want to be here when they arrive."

She lifted her face for his good-by kiss, but he touched her mouth lightly and then pressed his lips with a more lingering tenderness on her forehead.

"You insist that you love me," he said gently, "but you can't go on because you can't stand the gaff—possible

scandal and all that. In the face of that, I can't very well force the situation; I'd feel like a brute. But as to your loving me, I'm not quite sure about that, Edith."

He looked at her gravely.

"It's better never to let a man be sure of anything," she said lightly, smiling bravely at him as he left the room.

She stood still staring after him, and her eyes filled slowly with tears. After all, she comforted herself, it was something to be proud of that their sympathy was of so fine a quality that friendship could form for them a sane basis for future intercourse. With this she must be content.

\* \* \*

Edith Pelham possessed masculine traits which qualified her for friendship. She had courage, candour and a sense of fair play. But she was more subtle, in an unfeline way, than most women, and her intuitions were very fine.

In a hundred trifling ways, so trifling that they would have escaped the notice of anyone less sensitively strung, she had become aware that Brent's love for her was just a shade less vivid, just a note less strong than it had been. Sometimes after a remark of hers, or in the middle of a recountal of some incident designed to amuse him, she had realized that his attention had wavered or actually ceased. Always he had covered the lapse with a polite solicitude which aroused in her the reflection that were they married he might not do even that.

She had wondered if her whimsical gift as a raconteur had lost its piquancy. Sometimes during a brief silence, in the house or in the open, she had grown suddenly alive to his spiritual aloofness from her. Silence between them had always been pregnant with unspoken communion; his thoughts had either centered on her and their love, or had followed with her a wave of thought upon which their conversation had embarked them.

Occasionally, in recent months, he had been late to appointments with her; invariably gracefully apologetic, but

late. Her inner conviction was that his love for her had begun to recede a little even before it had reached its apex, and she felt that before it should recede beyond power to return she must take a drastic step. There followed her plan to end their affair and to give him a convincing, if not altogether truthful, reason for so doing. Above all else, he must never suspect that he had failed her, for that would forever prevent a renascence of his passion.

As she stood in the room where Brent had accepted his dismissal, she wished, more intensely than ever before, that her husband had been more flagrant in his conduct toward her. If only he would put in her hands some legal weapon of more constructive value than social sympathy and tolerance! If she and Hugh Brent were married, perhaps their love, freed from the degrading necessity for subterfuge, would retain its glow and beauty to the end! Perhaps . . . how could she be sure, after all, what byways Harry might explore? He was so far away . . . It might be worth while to . . . perhaps . . .

## CHAPTER II

THE mellow days of late summer passed into the flaming splendour of autumn, and still Edith lingered in her country house. And still Brent came out from town to see her twice a week, with unabated zest for a friendship which her charm and tact kept delicately balanced between a frank camaraderie which dispelled self-consciousness and a teasing coqueterie which lured while it mocked his masculine susceptibility. There was never a sentimental backwash from the past, nor a speculative probing of the future. Although laid upon a secure foundation of mutual tastes and interests, their intercourse had just that sense of impermanence which gave it flavour.

But for all this, Edith knew that it was merely a question of time for Brent to seek what his nature craved and what she would not give—emotional appeal

and response. So she waited, tremulously eager and afraid, for the first signs of the love-fever in his eyes. She would know, even if he should withhold his confidence from her. However light his love for a woman, it would always be sincere and redeemed by tenderness and, until ennui or disillusion should come, he would believe himself in love, and thus his secret would be Edith's. She rejoiced that he was incapable of crude sensuality, but the bitterest drop in the cup of her renunciation was the thought of his tenderness toward another woman. Vaguely, she clung to the hope that he would seek and find outside of his own class. Marriage, in that event, would be less of a menace, and as to other complications she could trust his discretion.

Late November found her in the South on a somewhat prolonged visit. She returned, not to her country, but to her town house, soon after Christmas. She telephoned to Brent, whose voice sounded warm with eagerness to see her, but whose manner when they met was not quite natural. He arrived at tea-time. The lamps were lighted, and eyes tell no tales by lamplight. But she probed gently and with a laugh:

"Blonde or brunette, Hughie?"

Her insight startled while it reassured him. It did away with a preface, with embarrassment, with what might be called an *apologia*, and if she took it that way, why, hang it—!

"She's blonde, not tall and—er—good figure, but not the sylph variety. I suppose you'd call her plump—ugly word."

He stood before the fireplace and lighted a cigarette. He was too absorbed, apparently, to return Edith's level gaze.

"Go on," she said quietly, watching him.

He threw the match into the fire and sat down in an easy chair opposite. He did not speak at once. Abruptly he leaned forward, his clasped hands hanging between his knees. He began, eagerly explanatory:

"I think you'd like her, Edith. She's a quaint little thing. Dresses a bit like

girls in the 'seventies—not conspicuously, of course, just a touch of originality. Big blue eyes—suggest violets and early primroses—that sort of thing. But she's modern and clever. Great reader. Quite a little philosopher, with a good sense of humour. Knows a lot about art—modern art, very modern. Not what you *see*, but what you *feel*. That sort of thing, you know."

He halted, breathless, and lighted another cigarette.

"She sounds very—interesting. How young is she?"

Brent's laugh revealed a trace of embarrassment. "About twenty and looks like a sub-deb."

"Is she a *débutante*?" Edith got up, took the fire tongs and pushed back a log.

"Heaven forbid. She's from the middle west. She's studying here—illustrating. Clever at it, too."

"Oh, I see!" Edith returned to the lounge. Her cheeks felt suddenly cooler and her lips smiled faintly, so faintly that Brent did not know she had smiled. "Bachelor girl? Does she live alone?"

"No, hardly. She lives with two other girl students. Jolly girls. Live like men. Very independent. Come and go and do as they please. Take turns entertaining their friends—I mean they don't get in each other's way."

"That is an ideal sort of ménage. But tell me more about *the* girl. What makes her look so young?"

"Well, her complexion's very fair and rosy and her hair—why, it's bobbed, you know."

"Oh, of course, it would be!"

"What do you mean, it *would* be?" he spoke a little sharply.

"Why, all the young girls, and some not so young, wear their hair bobbed, and don't the girls down there all—?"

"Down where?" he interrupted. "You mean the Village, of course. She's not that sort, even though she lives there. She's original, views and everything else. A bit outspoken, for a young girl, but not crude."

"Is she fond of you?" Edith's ques-

tion seemed to dismiss all other details as inconsequential.

"Yes, I suppose she is."

"Then, my dear, why not marry her?"

"Marry her! I don't want to marry and I'm sure she doesn't."

"But, dear, if she's such an innocent little thing—"

Brent stared at her, amazed.

"Good lord, Edith, don't be so literal. She's not innocent in that sense—I mean, she may have had one affair, perhaps two. But there's a sort of innocence that nothing really hurts. She's not that kind."

"There *is* that kind," meditated Edith softly, "but it's rare."

She paused a moment, then she added with a warm smile:

"Suppose you bring her to see me. Women understand each other, and you don't want to hurt her. Remember, Hugh, you promised to confide in me and trust me. Let me meet her, and I'll be able to advise you more intelligently."

Brent fumbled his cigarette with rather nervous fingers.

"It's awfully good of you, old dear, but the fact is she may not be very keen to come. She doesn't like conventional people, not the women anyway. You'd probably frighten her to death, poor little flapper!"

Edith bit her lips and her eyes flashed at him across the short space that divided them, but the firelight shone on her face and it was merely as if her gray eyes sparkled. Conventional! An ogre, and a mature one at that! Very mature, as compared to a flapper! Yet thirty, she admitted, is older than twenty—just the difference of the ten years that rob a woman of her physical youth. But a girl who had had already more than two lovers, where was her freshness? At any rate, he didn't want to marry her. But what about the girl's wishes? Hugh was probably more eligible than previous lovers. She *must* meet her!

"I'll not frighten your little flapper, my dear," she said with an easy smile,

"and if she really knew about me, she wouldn't think me conventional, would she?"

Which remark was not calculated to put Brent at his ease, but he promised to bring—Fanny, her name was, he told Edith—to tea some day that week.

### CHAPTER III

It was two weeks, however, before Edith saw either Hugh or the girl. Then one morning, he telephoned to her and in the afternoon came to tea with Fanny.

Fanny—or, not to begrudge her the name to which she was no doubt entitled—Frances Burton—returned Edith's cordial greeting with a vivacious smile and a languid hand. That hand clasp repelled Edith. It meant either affectation or stupidity and in either case ill-breeding. The blue eyes, which suggested to Brent early violets and primroses, met Edith's questioning gray ones with an assurance that seemed a little brazen, and unlighted by the smile that curved the full lips.

Her coat was nondescript, but her hat was a black satin bonnet with a red rose on the side. This she carelessly removed and tossed upon a chair. Her bobbed hair was undeniably pretty and at a little distance she really did look, Edith decided, not more than eighteen or nineteen. There were no lines, no hollows—she was far too young for that; Edith had none herself—but there were little shadows under the eyes and near the mouth which vaguely contradicted the signs of youth. Her dress was, as Hugh had said, quaint. It, like the bonnet, was of black satin, short waisted, with a full gathered skirt, short puffed sleeves and a neck cut decidedly low. As Fanny had a very firm, rounded bust and full white throat, the cut of her bodice seemed a little flagrant to Edith. Certainly, it was an odd costume for afternoon tea *à trois*.

While they were having tea, Edith was called to the telephone which was in her room. When she returned to the living room, her guests were standing

in front of an old Japanese brocade. Fanny had an arm around Brent's neck and she did not withdraw it as Edith came forward. She drew him playfully toward the couch, as she addressed Edith:

"Do tell us where you picked it up." Then, with a toss of her hair she threw Brent an intimate look that excluded Edith. "We'll have to get a piece like that for our Snug Harbor place, won't we, Hughie?"

Brent's face grew red and he managed to extricate himself on the pretext of offering tea and cake to his playful little flapper.

Edith's wit was more than usually brilliant and amusing that afternoon. Brent laughed appreciatively. Fanny smiled appraisingly, and between the two of them Edith felt stimulated to a sparkling joyousness that made her appear as young as Hugh's untouched innocent with her baby eyes. Fanny talked more seriously than Edith, leaned, as it were, more to the intellectual than the flippant. Brent said very little. He smoked and watched the two women and wondered—but no one was concerned with what he was thinking.

The talk turned to art, or was brought there by Edith asking the girl if she was exhibiting with the Independents.

"Oh, no! It's a colourist exhibit, you know. Mine are just black and whites—illustrating, hack-work. But next year I'll be in it. You see, I only discovered I had this talent a year ago, but I'm so young it doesn't matter, does it?"

Edith agreed that it didn't and forthwith decided that Fanny was not twenty, nor even twenty-two. Then she rashly and facetiously attacked some of the weirder of the pictures of the Independents.

"That 'Venice by Moonlight,' for example. Where is Venice and where, Oh where! is the moon?" she ended, with a laugh.

Fanny lighted a cigarette and spoke languidly:

"It's really one of those things that can't be pointed out"—explained, Mrs. Pelham.

"It shouldn't have to be," Edith insisted, smiling. "Imagine having one of Turner's sunsets on the Thames explained!"

"Oh—Turner!" Fanny's smirk of scorn relegated Turner and any one who was obsolete enough to admire him to their proper place in the evolution of Art.

"But, my dear child,"—Edith was imperturbable and subtly flattering—"I really would be grateful if you'd tell me why the artist gives a title to his conception if it's so obvious what he means by it. Isn't it like the drawing of little Tommy under which he writes, 'This is a Cat'?"

Fanny threw a despairing glance at Brent, but he seemed deeply preoccupied with the bowl of his pipe. Then she leaned her head against the back of the couch, watched the smoke curl upward from her cigarette and said indifferently:

"I presume the artist hopes to make it a little easier for the uneducated public, but I admit it's foolish of him. He should be content with the understanding of the initiated."

She turned her glance slowly upon Edith.

"Art, Mrs. Pelham, is not a photographic copy, but the expression, through the artist's medium—in this case, colour—of the impression made upon him by the object, person, or scene which he interprets. The impression made upon others by his work is irrelevant. Art is self-expression, or it is nothing. And when you look at a work of art, it is what you feel, not what you see, that is of interest."

Edith's lips trembled and she dared not glance at Hugh, who got up abruptly and leaned over the fire-place to shake out the bowl of his pipe.

"Then," said Edith with a gay little laugh, "we are all potential artists, for we've all got something to express and it must be dreadfully easy, if it doesn't matter in the least what any one else thinks of it."

"Oh," drawled Fanny, "sweeping generalizations are dangerous and, as

some Frenchman said, untrue, even this one!"

This time, the trembling of Edith's lips broke into an irresistible smile; she darted a glance at Brent and her eyes twinkled as she noted his sudden flush.

"So clever," she said sweetly. "It's next best to an original *bon mot* to be able to quote opportunely another's epigram. You remember Whistler's reply to the man who regretted not being the author of Whistler's latest witticism: 'Don't worry, old man, you'll say it tomorrow!'"

Brent laughed and Fanny turned sharply to look at him. Then she got up slowly and said she must really run away, as she had a dinner engagement with a man who hated to be kept waiting. Of course, Brent left with her, and when he shook hands with Edith he did not meet her eyes with his usual direct glance.

Edith stood staring into the burning logs for a long interval after they had left her. Her eyes were grave, but there was a smile on her lips, as if the muscles of her mouth responded automatically to her sense of humour. The sum of her reverie was as follows:

Fanny Burton was at least twenty-four or five—not such a flapper, after all. Also, her intelligence was of the imitative variety. She could absorb and glibly rehash the opinions and conclusions of whatever man she happened to be fond of at the moment. Not once, but several times, that afternoon she had given eloquent expression to some pet opinion of Hugh's, with which she, Edith, was familiar. No doubt other profound views of Fanny's were the accumulation, the excrescence, of the views of Hugh's predecessors. Thirdly, Fanny had been painfully correct in her conversation, and yet Hugh had implied that she was rather the reverse. She must have been unsure of herself. Therefore, considering her probable age, she was crude. As to the small vulgarity of her proprietary manner with Hugh, what could one expect? Finally—Edith would not advise Hugh in this affair, because he would not need advice.

The girl might have mercenary designs upon him, but he had taken no advantage of her and he would not—most certainly he would not—marry her.

A week later, he appeared and announced with a slight bravado intended to disguise his shamefacedness, that it was all off with him and Fanny Burton. She was—well, a little disappointing, and rather mercenary. He had made no promises; she had appeared indifferent to them. Consequently, he wasn't running away.

And so the first milestone was passed, and Edith waited.

#### CHAPTER IV

FOR a few weeks, Brent came to her as of old, for long talks over the fire or walks in the late afternoon. Then for days she did not see him. When he came she looked in his eyes and knew that the cards were again on the table for her to play them. This time, he did not wait for her questioning. He told her flatly that he was tremendously taken with a girl he had met through Fanny Burton. Fanny, by the way, he had originally met at a students' masked ball to which he and two other men had gone in a spirit of mischief. He was not, however, as communicative in regard to details as he had been in the case of Fanny. But he admitted that the girl intrigued him because he could not make her out. She did not appear to fit into any of the moulds represented by Fanny and her friends, and yet she consortied with them. She had great fascination for men and yet she was far from lax either in manner or conduct.

As to her past, well, her friends laughed at her for being what they called squeamish. Of course, she *might* have—but Hugh doubted it. Edith could see that he was sure she had not. She frankly admitted to being twenty-seven, but looked even younger. What did she do? Why, fiction, and she had sold a clever play. Was she pretty? No, handsome rather; some might call her beautiful. Tall yes, and dark and slender.

Marvelous eyes, but the thing one felt most was her magnetism. It made you forget what she looked like or what she said. Altogether, Edith was conscious of a sudden pang of fear. Then she said she hoped Hugh would bring his new friend to see her. Hugh gave her a look of faint reproach, then he smiled.

"She's different," he stated briefly. "That wouldn't be the acid test—if you're trying to be my shield and buckler against my own stupidity. And besides, I doubt if she'd come. It's odd, but in some ways she's conventional. I can't even find out where or what she's come from. I'm really rather smitten, Edith—nothing serious, of course—and I'd like to know more about her."

Edith studied him a moment in silence, then said slowly:

"You'd like to experiment. She arouses your sex curiosity. But you are inclined to think she is the kind that honour demands you leave alone, unless you fall deeply in love and want to marry her. Well, Hugh, if I knew her, perhaps I could size up the situation for you. At any rate, keep me posted and I'll help you in any way I can, old pal."

It was two weeks after this conversation before Brent called again. He seemed depressed, diffident about expressing himself and nervous in manner. Finally, he burst out:

"Confound it, Edith, I don't know what to do about that girl! I've nearly lost my head several times—nearly asked her to marry me, I mean." He was too self-absorbed to notice the quick flow of blood to Edith's face. "Deep down, I don't love her enough for that and I know it, but I wouldn't be the first man to resort to marriage in similar circumstances. Sometimes I think she's playing to that; at other times I'm ashamed of my suspicions and feel sure she cares for me, and doesn't believe in marriage. It's then I have to fight my own feelings and her—well, her intensely emotional nature. But I can't keep away from her. It's getting on my nerves."

During this confession, he had walked

up and down the room, smoking nervously.

Edith watched him with pain in her heart, but with a deep understanding of him and, she thought, of the situation. But she could not be sure without knowing the girl. She had a sharp misgiving that if things went on, Hugh would marry this Janice Keith voluntarily, or would precipitate a situation which would put him later in her power. Edith's intuitions made her suspicious of Janice and her innocence. Finally, Brent agreed to arrange for an accidental meeting between the two women, which would give Edith a chance to judge of the girl and to help him with her advice.

Surely it was an extraordinary situation, but Brent was conscious only of his utter confidence in this woman he had loved and of his dependence upon her. For her part, she knew that at any cost she would put his happiness and welfare before her own. If the girl were genuine and marriage seemed desirable, she would urge it. If not, well she might urge it just the same, but from a different motive and without scruple as to method.

Brent's plan was to take Janice to a small downtown theater on a specific night and meet Edith in the lobby after the play. The rest would be up to Edith. The preliminaries were simple, but when, quite casually, Brent presented Janice to his old friend, Mrs. Pelham, Edith found the subtle appraisal from the dark, enigmatic eyes almost disconcerting. With rare charm and skill, she conveyed to the girl her disinterested friendship for Brent and her earnest desire to know and like his friends. At any rate, Janice accepted this status or was clever enough to pretend to do so; Edith was not certain which. She asked Janice to come for tea some afternoon, quite alone, so that they could get closer in touch than would be possible with a man in the offing.

Later, when Edith rehearsed mentally her meeting with Janice, she felt distinctly bewildered. The girl was undeniably beautiful—how could Hugh

have minimized her beauty?—and her magnetism was strong enough to charm another woman. She was correctly dressed and her voice and manner indicated a culture superior to that of many women socially unassailable. And yet, what was it? Something disturbing and sinister reached to the depths of Edith's consciousness. But overlaying all other thoughts or emotions was the marvel of it that Hugh had been able to control his impulse to ask Janice to marry him, as it seemed inconceivable that his passion for her could brook obstacle or delay. Men, for all their proverbial simplicity, were certainly at times disconcertingly complex.

## CHAPTER V

JANICE was to come for tea at four on Wednesday of the following week. Edith had not seen Hugh in the interim, but he telephoned her Wednesday morning to ask if he might call at five-thirty or six to take Janice off for dinner. At about twelve o'clock Edith received a telegram sent from the Cunard dock. It was from a very old and loyal friend whom she had not seen for several years—Sam Pemberton—a man who had loved her in her early girlhood and who, so his infrequent letters had assured her, never loved another woman.

Pemberton was one of those Americans of inherited wealth who lose neither their national allegiance nor peculiarities, but who have found Europe an agreeable field for the indulgence of expensive hobbies. But his hobbies were interesting and constructive, so he was not a mere expatriated derelict.

His wire stated that he had just arrived from Bordeaux, had tried to get her on the telephone and would come to see her at five that afternoon. He begged her to make no engagements for either afternoon or evening, and to break any which might be already made. He had something very important to tell her about Harry, and he hadn't seen her for so long that he couldn't wait any way.

Edith, sincerely eager to meet again this loyal admirer who had never possessed and never ceased to love her, and more than curious to hear what he had to say about her husband, felt a thrill of anticipation which lightened the accumulated sadness of the past months. Then suddenly she remembered Janice. She tried to reach her by telephone, but had not succeeded up to three o'clock. She had the impulse to send her a wire, but it seemed unlikely that Janice would receive it in time and, besides, such a message might offend her and put off indefinitely an interview for which Edith had manœuvred. It didn't matter, after all, for if Sam should arrive before Hugh should come to carry Janice away, Sam could wait.

The quiet hour over the tea-table with the girl who threatened her future chance to win Hugh back to the old allegiance, made conflicting impressions upon Edith. Had she met Janice under different circumstances, she would have felt unmixed pleasure and stimulation in this contact with a broad and agile feminine mind.

The girl, apparently, had traveled, off and on, from babyhood, and the grist which had gone to the mill of her mind and temperament had been varied and interesting. In the background there was brushed in lightly an English father, discredited by narrow and snobbish connections because of a rather humble marriage; unsuccessful efforts to make a fortune in South America, and later, death, and a girl of twenty left alone without resources or family backing; only her youth, her education and her wits. She had abjured marriage, waiting for a love of which she had—until now—been skeptical, and had managed to succeed up to her present point of attainment, in spite of all sorts of discouragement.

Edith never felt quite certain afterward if these tentative confidences had been evoked by her own tact and sympathetic interest—an interest which would have stirred in her regardless of Hugh—or if, back of an ingenuous frankness, lay deliberate intent to cajole

her sympathy and trust. Certainly, at the time, she was conscious only that her personality paled before that of this strange and seductive creature in whose eyes mystery and truth blended to invite and disarm suspicion.

Edith realized with a bitter foretaste of pain that she would not play the cards. She would not influence, by word or act, the outcome of Hugh's passion for a girl who could hold him, Edith believed, in or out of marriage. So far as she was concerned, the game was ended. She had gambled on the chance of Hugh's return to her, and she had lost. That was the end of it.

Edith had almost forgotten Sam Pemberton's existence when, at a quarter to five, he was announced. Janice was sitting with her back to the door, her dark head showing above the top of the lounge. Edith had intended to tell her of the imminent arrival of an old friend from overseas, but had not done so. She went quickly forward as he strode into the room.

Sam Pemberton saw only Edith, was conscious only of the touch of her soft warm fingers as he seized both her hands, and of the tender smile of welcome on the lips he had never kissed except in friendship.

"Dear old girl," he said, standing still, his eyes unconsciously caressing her face. "Lord, but it's good to see you again after five years!"

Sam was a big blond man with strong features and a drooping mustache, which was his one concession, and a superficial one, to European idiosyncrasies. His humorous blue eyes were dark now with emotion as he smiled down at her.

"Four," she retorted, laughing. "You forget that we met for a moment the day you reached Paris, just as I was leaving for Liverpool."

"A coincidence that gave me more pain than pleasure, and it doesn't count, any way."

She disengaged one hand and with the other she drew him toward the lounge.

"Sam, I have a friend concealed in

the cushions. Miss Keith, here's an old friend of mine, Sam Pemberton, who has almost expatriated himself. Perhaps you've met each other in Paris."

Janice had risen and stood facing them, very white and still. The knuckles of her clasped hands were even whiter than her face, as if the grip of her fingers had pressed the blood out of them.

Pemberton stood immovable, rigid. His hand holding Edith's relaxed and fell to his side. He stared at Janice, and Edith, spellbound, looked wide-eyed and frightened from one to the other.

"Yes," said Sam at last, very slowly. "We, Miss—er—Keith and I have met in Paris."

Edith's first conscious conjecture was that Sam had loved this girl, perhaps had had a serious affair with her, and that Janice had treated him badly. Instinctively, she ranged herself with the other woman. She took a step nearer to the couch and the electric current of her sympathy reached Janice, who insensibly moved toward Edith.

Then, like a flash, Edith remembered Hugh and that he would arrive at any moment.

Well she knew Sam's tenacity and unceremonious candour. There must not be a scene, and above all she must spare Janice embarrassment.

She turned to Pemberton.

"Sam," she said, almost coldly. "I am expecting a friend of mine and of Miss Keith's. Do you mind going away now and coming back for me at half past six?"

He stood calm and unflinching.

"I'll wait," he said tersely, and walked across the room to the window.

Edith flushed with anger and started after him, but Janice seized her arm and spoke hurriedly and very low.

"Please—please, let me go. I can't, oh, I can't wait till Hugh comes!" She reached for her furs, and as Edith tried to take them from her she came very close and said in a broken murmur:

"You don't understand. He—" she threw a look toward the window where

Pemberton was standing with his back to them—"he will tell you everything. It's all true, but it hasn't been that with Hugh—not since the very beginning. I love him." Her dark eyes were brilliant with sudden tears. "I would have lived with him or married him, for I didn't think it would injure him. But now, it's over. He—he's mad about me, but he doesn't love me, not enough to forgive. And I can't see him now—not now," she repeated faintly.

Edith felt an acute, if blind, compassion for this girl in whose past lay hidden something ugly and sinister. She wanted to shield her and with this intent she took her arm and started with her toward her bedroom. She wanted to keep her there until she could get rid of Pemberton and Brent, if the latter should arrive before Pemberton's departure. But it was too late. They had not heard the doorbell nor steps in the hall, and Brent stood on the threshold of the living-room.

His bright smile of greeting stiffened to an expression of astonishment as he took in the picture of the two women clinging to each other, Edith meeting his glance with frowning distress, and Janice with a white face and tragic eyes. He came slowly into the room. Then he saw Pemberton approaching them slowly from the other end of the room.

"What the—"

Edith gave the cold hand she held a quick squeeze, then dropped it and walked to where Brent had halted.

"Hugh, Janice isn't feeling very well. You must take her right home. But say hello first to my old friend, Sam Pemberton. Sam, this is one of my newer friends, Hugh Brent."

The men shook hands perfunctorily. Brent with an aggressive brusqueness and Pemberton with a dogged expression of defiance. Each was unconscious of his own lack of courtesy, but Edith trembled with nervous dread. Without further ceremony, she escorted Janice and Brent out of the room and then turned to Pemberton, ready to flay him for the scene he had so

nearly precipitated. But before she could speak, he said harshly:

"Where did you meet that—that young woman?"

"She's a friend of Hugh's. He—he's in love with her, I think."

"Do you mean to say she's living here under an assumed name and hasn't been found out?" He stared at Edith incredulously.

Edith stared back at him coldly. "Do you realize, my friend, that you are throwing out unpleasant hints about a girl I introduced to you as a friend of mine, and who isn't here to defend herself? You'd better be more explicit, or say nothing."

"I'll be explicit enough. Is your friend Brent coming back here?"

"No, not now, surely."

"Well then, sit down and I'll tell you the whole story. You can use your own discretion about telling Brent. I should suppose your loyalty to him, however, would compel your opening his eyes."

Before either of them could move or speak again, Brent walked into the room. He stood arrested, his eyes flashing from one to the other. They were taken aback and waited for him to speak.

"Janice wouldn't let me go home with her." He addressed Edith. "She refused to talk to me until I had talked to—this gentleman."

## CHAPTER VI

BRENT looked at Pemberton with undisguised challenge in his eyes. He did not explain just why he had returned. The fact was that Janice, standing with him in front of the open door of the taxicab, had insisted in a manner which verged on hysteria that Brent return to Edith's apartment. Brent, to quiet her, had agreed, but on condition that he call on her that evening. She had refused positively to dine with him.

Silence met his initial remark. Then he said, obviously trying to control his excitement:

S. S.—Oct.—2

"Will you kindly tell me, sir, what all this means?"

"I most certainly will, sir, if you wish to hear."

Edith intervened with nervous haste.

"Oh, please, Sam, don't, not now, not here!"

She turned beseechingly to Brent. "Hugh, dear, *please* go away and come back here later this evening. Let me talk to Sam."

Brent paid no attention to her appeal. He continued to look directly at Pemberton. He said, more quietly:

"Janice told me to believe whatever you tell me."

Edith moved mechanically to the switch that lighted the lamps, then wearily she threw herself in a corner of the lounge, her eyes turning restlessly from one man to the other. They stood almost immovable, confronting each other. Finally, Pemberton said with slow reluctance:

"I regret the ill-chance which brought me here this afternoon. I regret the necessity for making a statement which you compel me to make. Well—that young woman is one of the best known and, up to the war, one of the most successful young adventuresses on the Continent."

Brent's hands were clenched, but he didn't move nor speak. Edith trembled, her eyes now fixed on Pemberton's face.

"Go on," she said, very low. "You can't stop at that."

"No," stated Pemberton calmly, "I can't. I know nothing for certain about her antecedents, except that it was generally believed that she came from good stock on her father's side and that after his death she had no relatives to fall back on. But with her personality and education she could have made a place for herself if she'd stuck to it. There was a hint of an unfortunate affair with a married man, which left her bitter. At any rate, she found men easy victims and she wanted money. The ordinary career of a courtesan didn't satisfy her. With exquisite and refined cunning, she became one of the

most remarkable blackmailers Europe has known. I had the honour of being one of her earliest victims. That was eight years ago, when she was twenty-three. She is thirty-one now. The second year of the war she disappeared from Paris. The report was she had gone to Italy for ambulance service. I can't imagine what *milieu* she managed to get into here, but evidently Europe is a long way off and possibly she has reformed. That's all—and enough."

Edith sat perfectly still and Brent moved stiffly, as if his limbs were cramped. He walked slowly to the window and stood there with his hands in his pockets for what seemed to Edith an interminable interval. Pemberton sauntered to the fireplace and lighted a cigarette. He glanced occasionally at Edith with troubled eyes, but she did not look at him. Her sombre gaze was fixed on Brent's motionless figure lined against the outer darkness of the night.

Suddenly he turned and walked to the lounge. He bent over Edith and murmured something she did not hear. Pemberton unobtrusively walked across the room away from them. Edith stood up and went close to Brent.

"I'm going," he said quietly. "I'm going to see her. You've been very kind, Edith."

"Kind!" she whispered. "I want you to be happy, Hugh, and, listen to me, dear. If you love Janice, don't let anything else matter. I'm sure she loves you."

His face hardened and she repeated with a pressure of her hand on his arm:

"I'm sure of it. She's been playing fair with *you*, and that's all that concerns you."

Brent gave her a piercing look. She met his eyes fearlessly. He frowned and his lips tightened.

"It's the sordidness of it all—the awful sordidness," he said bitterly. "Other things wouldn't matter."

And then, without another word, he left the room.

That evening Edith and Pemberton talked long and earnestly of many

things and a few persons—principally of Harry Pelham, but that is another story, or at least, another part of this one and out of place just here.

The following afternoon Brent appeared, unhappy-eyed and morose. Edith gave him a highball and then sat silent, knitting, waiting for him to unburden himself. She could think of no question that might not hurt or irritate, and no comment that would not sound trivial.

"Edith," he began abruptly, "I couldn't do it."

"Do what?" she asked, without looking up.

"Go on with it."

She said nothing for a moment, then: "What did she say to you?"

"I told her what Pemberton told us and she said it was true, every damn word of it. The swearing is mine. She came over here two years ago and looked up some old friends she had known when she first went to Paris, in the Latin Quarter. They lost track of her long ago and never connected the girl they had known with what she afterward became. She told me that she is what she claims to be now, a writer. She made no defense and no explanation."

"Don't you admire her for that?"

"Of course." His brevity sounded almost impersonal.

"Didn't she tell you what she told me, that her affair with you has been—all right?" Edith ended ineffectively.

"Yes," he replied laconically. "And I believe her."

"Then what—why do you say you can't go on with it?"

Brent did not reply at once, then he said haltingly:

"I suppose because I don't—*care* enough."

"But, Hugh," Edith was almost breathless, "didn't she tell you she loves you, better than she has ever loved before?"

"No. She said that she was fond of me, that I appealed to her. That she might have gone on with it, preferably as my mistress; but that she would have

married me if I'd asked her. But that now, as I'd found out the truth from others, she would grow to hate me eventually."

"She didn't mean that, I know she didn't," said Edith impulsively.

"I think she did." There was a moment of silence, then he added:

"I don't love her, Edith. Not enough to overcome my disgust for the thing I hate above everything—sordidness. A blackmailer! I know absolutely that if I really loved her nothing on earth would matter. If I'd asked her to marry me, I'd have married her. As it is, if I should give way to my desire for her—just that, my *desire*—I'd deserve a horsewhipping. I tell you, I don't love her. I almost wish to God I did, but I don't and I never can now."

And thus another milestone was passed, and once again they drifted—Edith and Brent—upon the quiet tide of a companionship which seemed to rest Brent's strained sensibilities and which at times caused Edith a dull pain and a restless craving to escape from a situation she had deliberately created.

One day he said to her:

"Old girl, sometimes I almost wish I could marry."

Startled out of her composure, she answered quickly:

"Marry—whom?"

He smiled at her and said without hesitation:

"You, preferably; but as there seems no remote chance of that, why some one who—whom I could care enough for to live with indefinitely, and who could feel the same about me."

"But why," demanded Edith, forcing a smile, "this sudden change of heart? I thought you really disliked the idea on general principles."

"Just this, my dear girl. Love—all that—is only part of a man's life, if you like; but it's a very real and necessary part, at least for some of us. And I'm sick, utterly sick, of the sort of thing that satisfies some men. I want something more permanent."

She laughed outright; she could not help it. "Oh, my dear, you are funny!"

What is permanent about marriage? If there is such a thing as an abiding love, that's permanent; but many a man has been faithful for years to a mistress, just as many a one is faithless to a wife."

"Yes," he agreed soberly. "But nevertheless—well, I daresay I'm a fool, but if I could find the right girl, I think perhaps—"

It was thus that Edith was made to face that hidden foe—the possibility of Brent entangling himself in purely conventional fashion, which had menaced her from ambush ever since she had turned him from lover into friend. But she must wait, as she had waited all these months past. He was not ready yet to come back to her, she knew that, and if he should chance to meet some girl in their own *milieu* whom he might wish to marry before other things could come to pass—things that were, the Gods be praised, hastening to their irrevocable end—why then it was Kismet and the tale would be told.

## CHAPTER VIII

FIVE weeks went by and it was April. For over a fortnight Edith had neither seen Hugh, nor heard from him. Sam Pemberton's devotion and companionship had come to an end, for he had sailed the previous week for France. About this time, she went one afternoon to a private musicale, one of those affairs where real music is played by real musicians—high-priced professionals—to really unmusical people. Afterward there was tea and cake, and prattle and tittle-tattle and a general babel of high-pitched sound. Edith was moving toward the nearest exit when her roving and disinterested glance caught a stare of unveiled and almost insolent curiosity in a pair of dark blue eyes across the room. Edith knew the girl by sight and by name, but had not met her.

This girl whose curious stare gave Edith a sudden start of discomfort was the daughter of a well-known war profiteer whose clever manipulation of certain big interests had put a number

of prominent men in his debt and in his power. The direct result of a tacit, but gratifying, return of amenities was the introduction into the inner shrine by obedient wives and daughters of Creighton's daughter, Alice. She was a very lovely type of tall and slender blonde, with a perfect complexion, coldly perfect features and a manner of unassertive superiority. She appeared to be delicately bred and had certainly been reared with as much distinction (if under different auspices) as any of the women who covertly regarded her as an alien. There was no mother to explain or conceal, and Alice Creighton, although only twenty-four, was quite able to steer her way among the devious paths and the many pitfalls of a social career.

Edith observed that a woman she knew very well was chatting with Miss Creighton. She sauntered toward them, impelled by a sudden curiosity to meet this young woman in whose glance she had felt an inexplicable hostility. Edith approached the two women with a smile, and her friend reached out an affectionate hand in greeting. An introduction followed, a few words of intimate pleasantries and then the friend strolled away.

"Wonderful ensemble work of the Leslie's, isn't it?" Edith began pleasantly. "Quite the most perfect accord between piano and violin that I have ever heard. And to think that the musicians should be man and wife," she ended with a little laugh.

Alice Creighton's immobile, but beautiful, lips gave Edith a chilly smile. "I'm afraid I haven't reached the point, Mrs. Pelham, of being cynical about marriage."

"A jest, my dear Miss Creighton, merely a jest, I assure you." Edith's eyes were unsmiling and her teeth showed in tiny points between her parted lips.

"Oh, of course! Because I've always heard that a woman is never really cynical about marriage until she has tried a more easy relation and been disappointed in both."

Edith breathed quickly, but with calm assurance she said lightly:

"How quickly young girls nowadays pick up worldly wisdom! You are most interesting, my dear. Your charm and beauty have, of course, been heralded, but I am glad that I have discovered for myself your wit. Do come and see me."

Alice looked at her, with cold and undisguised insolence.

"Thank you; but, you see, I am being most horribly chaperoned, really shadowed you know, and I fear I can't."

A whip lash across her face could not have brought the blood there more stingingly. Then, as quickly, it ebbed and left her deathly pale. With burning eyes and quivering lips, Edith Pelham looked at this insolent young parvenue from head to foot. Afterward, she turned and swiftly made her escape from a house that seemed to stifle her.

She walked toward the Park almost too dazed to know whither she was going. Brisk walking quieted her nerves and she was able to think clearly. Had she, after all, been like the ostrich in supposing that because she had actually heard no gossip nor criticism of herself, that therefore none had existed? Surely she could trust her friends, but there were others on the outer circle of her acquaintance who might have bandied her name about in connection with Brent's. Obviously, this dreadful girl had heard something, but if she were not herself an alien she would have understood that she—Edith Pelham—was immune from such defamation.

As to the incredible ill-breeding of the girl's attack, there seemed nothing to explain it. It was almost as if some venom of personal dislike had for that moment eaten through the carefully polished veneer of the parvenue. In all Edith's life, never had she met with social affront, and to think that she had calmly stood and crossed swords with the creature, and deliberately invited insult. Oh, it was unbearable, unbelievable! She would tell Hugh. It would be a comfort to hear him rage at the incident. But the next instant she knew that she would never tell him. It was

too humiliating. She was too well balanced for morbid introspection and she returned home presently, determined to put the matter completely out of her mind.

The next day Brent telephoned to ask if he might call that afternoon. He had, he said, something important to talk over with her. Some premonition must have warned her, for she felt a sudden shrinking from the interview which she could not analyze. She hesitated, but ended by telling him that he might come for tea. For a time, they chatted on the surface, Edith acutely conscious that both were pushing from them the inevitable confidence that he had come to make. She did not ask him why he had not come to see her recently and he volunteered neither excuse nor explanation. Then, unexpectedly, very soberly, he said:

"Edith, old girl, I've found some one I think I'd like to marry."

Her heart missed a beat—quite literally—and yet some strange prescience had prepared her for this bald avowal. With a teasing smile, which conquered the trembling of her mouth, she answered him:

"As easy as that, Hughie?"

He gave an embarrassed laugh.

"Far from it. The fact is—" he hesitated. "Why, I guess I'm rather out of practice—at the conventional thing, I mean."

Again he stabbed her all unconsciously and she thought, "How cruel men are." But she smiled once more and said, with a touch of irony she could not restrain:

"Do you think, my dear, that I am conventional enough to be able to help you?"

"Old dear," he parried gently, "you know jolly well what I meant."

## CHAPTER IX

THAT was all, but it comforted her. The sweetness of the comfort brought tears back of her eyes and she rose abruptly and asked him to mix some highballs. Unsuspecting, he made them,

and as she raised her glass, she said gaily:

"Here's to the 'certain evils'—marriage and so forth. Perhaps they're safer after all than 'uncertain blessings.'"

He was a little doubtful what her pleasantry conveyed, but he could wait no longer for what he wished to tell her.

"I met rather an extraordinary sort of girl a few weeks ago, Edith. She's quite young, twenty-four; but she has a lot of poise and *savoir faire*. She's been educated abroad—convent, governesses, travel—and she's very talented. Plays violin and piano, both. She's an unusual type for an American." He stopped and looked at Edith, as if waiting for some question or comment to encourage his recital.

"How is it you haven't met her before? She must have come out at least four years ago." Edith strove to follow his lead of casual approach to the heart of the matter.

"Why—er—no, she's never had a regular *début*. The fact is, they come from the west and she's been in Europe most of the time. I doubt if you've met her, or even seen her. She's been taken up this winter by some of the mothers whose daughters are safely married and by some of the very young married crowd."

"Taken up. What do you mean? How did she get in, in the first place, if she doesn't even belong here?"

"Well, I guess it was a question in the first place of her father pulling certain strings of high finance."

A sudden fear seized Edith. She felt herself trembling and took a long swallow of the whiskey and appolinaris, which she had allowed to stand forgotten.

"Tell me more about the girl, Hugh. What does she look like?"

"I think you'd call her beautiful. She's tall, slender and a vivid blonde. She has the face of a young puritan and, I'm afraid, the point of view of one. She piques my interest, because she's so different from the average modern girl. I'm not in love, not yet; but I

think I could be and I rather think I'd like to be, if I could make her care for me."

Edith sat very still, with head bent, staring at the rug at her feet. She dreaded to meet Brent's eyes for fear that her own, always dangerously expressive, might convey to him a perturbation of mind which he would be likely to misconstrue. And the primary cause of her distress he must never discover. Presently, she said:

"What seems to be the difficulty in making her care for you?"

He gave a short laugh. "She's very much run after, for one thing. I don't know how much her father's millions has to do with that, but I'm sure that some of those chaps must find her attractive, and illusive, as I do."

"Possibly," Edith replied slowly, "she's looking for some one even more eligible than you."

"Eligible! I'm certainly not that; but considering my own fair success and what's coming my way later on, I don't count on being accused of fortune hunting. If she has the capacity for emotion which I believe she has, why I've a fighting chance. But, hang it all, Edith, my experiences with women have been so limited that any new type leaves me absolutely at sea."

By now she had herself in hand and she smiled, an amused, cold little smile. "There are no new types, my dear, just slight variations of the old ones, and at most there are only a few of those. And, you know, those few merge into one sometimes—at crucial moments—so you men really ought to understand us individually better than you do. But what is there so complex about your new flame?"

He hesitated. "Well, she flirts outrageously, and then again she fairly withers, with cold disapproval, any approach to freedom. After the girls I've been accustomed to, it's rather a shock. And then again—it's hard to express—but as a matter of fact, there are times when, if she were a different sort, or of a different class, you'd almost think that she wanted all the excitement of being

made love to without paying the price."

Edith frowned at him thoughtfully. "The *demi-vierge* type, you mean?" Her baldness startled him.

"With her, it's sheer innocence and ignorance of the masculine point of view. But she's full of contradictions. I sometimes think the surer she is of a man, the less chance he has."

"Then why," asked Edith, with a quick lift of her head, "not let her suppose you interested in another woman?"

"Do you know, she's got some such idea, and I half think that's why she encourages me as much as she does."

Her chance shot had not missed fire. So that was the explanation of an attack as vulgarly brutal as it was, or had been, inexplicable.

"Play to that then," she said, in answer to his remark. Then she added: "Do you care to tell me her name?"

"Not just at this stage, my dear, if you don't mind. I've been so outspoken about her that if nothing comes of it, I'd rather feel that I hadn't mentioned names. If I go on with it and succeed, why of course you'll be the first to know it. I'll bring her right over to meet you."

"Has she, do you think, heard any gossip about you and me?" Edith met his eyes unwaveringly.

His expression grew troubled. "I'm sure not. She probably heard that I'd been devoted to some other woman until—this winter. I'd rather, naturally, that your name were kept out of it, for girls are queer. She might not want to—she might—"

"I understand," Edith interrupted gently. "Well, my dear, I wish you luck. I don't think I'll suggest your bringing her for inspection, as in the case of girls out of our class. If I can advise anytime, of course. And I want to meet her the instant you become engaged—if you do."

## CHAPTER X

WHEN Hugh had left her, Edith arrayed for her mental survey the facts

of the situation and her surmises, unbiased by emotional excitation. There was no faintest doubt as to the identity of the girl. Nor had she any uncertainty regarding Alice Creighton's knowledge, however superficial or tortured, of Hugh's affair with her.

It pained her to feel so helpless to save him from a woman of innate vulgarity of mind and coldness of temperament—a summing up of Alice which seemed to Edith logical and just. She might perhaps be in love with him, or ready to love him; but such a girl's love would at best be selfish and small, and even if Hugh were to retain his passion for her, his ideal would inevitably be destroyed and with it all chance of happiness.

The one aspect of the case that puzzled Edith was whether Alice desired marriage or merely the excitement—perhaps of a more erotic nature than Hugh dreamed—of the chase. If it were possible to save Hugh she would do it. But possibly disillusionment, in time to prevent marriage, would come more quickly with the intimacy of an engagement; and perhaps she could in some way hasten the course of these events.

During the next ten days, Edith made tentative enquiries regarding Alice Creighton. A few of her intimate friends, already prejudiced against this young alien because of her faint arrogance with women and her obvious lure for men, had fugitive gossip to impart which disquieted Edith.

For one thing, there was a rumour—so their husbands said—that in Paris, where Miss Creighton had been carefully chaperoned by a gay and impecunious young English widow of good birth retained by Jim Creighton, Alice had somehow acquired a reputation, little understood by women and detested by men. There had been vague hints that she was a rarely seductive type of *demi-vierge*—not in the literal sense, of course (the "of course" was vociferous) but spiritually, emotionally, and that men were rather afraid of her. But it went without saying that American

men were less sophisticated and were intrigued by what would not have the allure of mystery for the more seasoned Continental.

Edith knew that Hugh was more than usually innocent, and furiously she resented his powerlessness in the hands of this quasi-Puritan, who would suck a man's soul dry and barren and give in return only what it pleased her to give. There were moments of poignant regret for Edith that she had interfered in his affair with Janice Keith. The latter would have been a far better wife for him than this shallow upstart, while if Janice had entered into a less conventional arrangement with him, it would inevitably have rescued him from Alice Creighton.

Another rumour began to go about. It hinted that Creighton had put millions into cotton at a tragically wrong moment, also that too many eggs had been put by him into an equally unsafe basket. Of course, this was a mere Wall Street murmur, but then, one never knew with those vast and quickly amassed fortunes. He had always had money, more or less, but it had been poverty compared to what the past three years had yielded, and if things began to slip the down grade was sure to be rapid. This rumour discomfited Edith deeply. If there should be any truth in it, the chances were good that Alice, if she were at all attracted by Hugh, would accept him and his assured position and means.

The days went by, sweet-scented spring days of promise and ripening, and one afternoon Brent came to see her, out in her country home, whither she had gone with the first blossoms of April. He told her, without preliminaries, that Alice had accepted him and that they were to be married in September or October. He had, he informed Edith, begged her to forego the ceremony of an engagement and marry him at once, but she had laughed at his eagerness and said she wanted one more summer of freedom.

Edith's self-control was by now so assured that she could hold Hugh's

hand in a warm pressure and meet his restless dark eyes with a tender calm that soothed his spirit. His eyes were restless—that was the curious fact. There was a drooping of his mouth which she had never noticed before. He lacked the buoyant hopefulness and joy of the successful lover. And yet his eyes grew brilliant at a mere reference to Alice's beauty and the marvel that she had chosen him from the many who pursued her.

"I should like," he said at last, "to bring Alice out here to meet you, Edith."

There was a scarcely perceptible hesitation in her reply:

"Are you sure that she wants to come?"

"I haven't spoken to her of you yet. Why shouldn't she want to come?" he asked, frowning.

"She may give you a reason when you ask her to."

"Just what do you mean, Edith?"

"Oh, don't take me so seriously! She's rather young, as you've told me before, and she probably would look upon me as quite a matron. It might bore her to come out here."

"Rubbish," he asserted briefly. "And I prefer to take for granted that she will be glad to know my friends."

"Well, don't force the issue. It might—oh, it might arouse her curiosity, even her antagonism! We don't either of us want that, do we, dear?"

"But you'd like to meet her, wouldn't you, old dear?" His eagerness for her approval sounded a trifle tremulous.

"Why, of course, dear, of course. Do bring Miss Creighton any day that is convenient for you both. Just let me know the day before, so that I'll have time decently to break any engagement I might have in town. Suppose you come for luncheon on Saturday. You won't mind if there are a few others here, will you?"

Hugh looked as if he minded, but all he said was:

"Anything you say, Edith. I'll telephone you Friday night if you're going to be home."

It had come to her as a sudden refuge from a possible three-cornered tête-à-tête to have other guests. Also, it would put an effective quietus on any speculative comment as to her attitude toward Hugh's engagement and his fiancée.

All this was on a Tuesday. Thursday the engagement was formally announced of Miss Alice Creighton to Mr. Hugh Brent. On Friday morning, Edith went to town for a business engagement and luncheon with friends. When she reached Delmonico's, her face was deeply flushed and her large gray eyes were bright with an excitement she found it difficult to curb. She wished that the formal corridors, the fashionable groups of men and women, the black-coated waiters, would vanish and leave her alone with her new elation of spirit. She almost hugged to her side her long, narrow hand-bag, as if something of infinite value were concealed within it.

The greetings of her friends, when she joined them just outside the main dining-room, ran somewhat in this fashion:

"My dear—have you heard the news about—?"

"Of course, she's heard it. Who hasn't by now?"

"I don't suppose it will make a bit of difference to Hugh Brent."

"Well, I don't know. Show me the man nowadays who scorns a wealthy bride."

Edith stared at them. "What on earth are you talking about?"

"You haven't heard! Why, my dear, it's in the last editions."

"What is, for Heaven's sake?" Edith frowned impatiently.

Then they told her. James Creighton, war profiteer and many times a millionaire, had made one coup too many and had been practically wiped out. That was the big, outstanding fact, supplemented by graphic details which had been supplied by stock exchange husbands. He had had antagonists, bitter enemies among the bankers, and they had chosen well their

hour of reprisal. Then someone said she wondered if Hugh Brent knew the crash was coming before the engagement was announced. Edith's reply was a little tart:

"You all know that Hugh isn't that kind. And Miss Creighton is unusually beautiful and charming, certainly to men. Why not take the rest for granted?"

In her heart, she was wondering if Alice had known what was impending when she accepted Hugh. And swiftly the wonder changed to an intuitive conviction that she had known of the impending calamity.

In her concern about Hugh's affairs, the reason for her own earlier excitement was temporarily forgotten.

The momentum of inexorable cause swung events to their climactic effect. Friday evening at about nine o'clock, Brent telephoned to Edith. She was startled by his voice, which sounded husky, as if he had been drinking, but a second later she realized that he was under an emotional strain. He asked if he might run out in his car to see her; by starting at once, he could reach her home before ten o'clock. She was too surprised to demur. All she said was:

"Why, yes, if you want to, I suppose."

"I do," he answered briefly, and hung up the receiver.

When he arrived, she noted his unusual pallor and the stern compression of his lips. His greeting was merely a hand-clasp and a deep look into her eyes, which brought a sudden glow to her face, although his expression conveyed nothing to her conscious mind. She refrained from being solicitous, but casually offered him a drink which he swallowed in apparent abstraction. The story he told Edith that night was not complete as to details; those he gave her on a later occasion when he could more calmly rehearse a scene, the mere remembrance of which reduced him to inarticulate rage. In its dramatic whole, the story was as follows:

## CHAPTER XI

BRENT had been due for dinner at James Creighton's home, Friday night at eight o'clock. He arrived at seven. When Alice entered the upstairs library where she always received him, before he could kiss her she said:

"Have you heard about father?" Her face indicated neither pain nor distress of any kind.

"Yes, sweetheart," he replied gently, putting his arm around her and kissing her. "I'm awfully sorry for him, of course; but what does it matter to us, little girl? In a way, do you know, dearest, I'm rather glad, unless you're unhappy about it, and I'm dead sure your father will pull things together again eventually."

Her smile seemed to him unaffectedly sweet and reassuring.

"You're a dear." She kissed him on the mouth and it stirred him more deeply than any kiss of his to which she had merely responded.

"It won't matter a bit being poor—with you," she added with a glance of tender appraisal.

"You darling!" He was deeply touched. Then he laughed a little. "But you know, we shan't be exactly poor, even for these days, and later on there's quite a bit coming to me when the estate of my uncle is settled. It will be a year or two, mortgages and so forth. But even without it, we'll do famously."

In justice to Alice Creighton, it must be admitted at this point—for later it will sink into insignificance—that she really did care more for Brent than for the two richer men whose serious devotion to her had spurred Brent to his recent avowal of love. He was distinctly more eligible as to social background, and he was far more attractive to other women. The memory of one particular woman gave a special flavor to her acceptance of him.

Alice told him that her father had left town for a few days and that their dinner would therefore be unchaperoned.

"Almost as if we were married," she said naïvely.

Of a sudden, Brent recalled his promise to telephone to Edith that same night, in regard to lunching with her on Saturday. It had seemed to him an easy and simple matter to tell his fiancée of his platonic affection for Edith Pelham, what a loyal pal she had been, and how eager she was to know and like the girl he was to marry. But now, unaccountably, he felt a disinclination to broach the subject. Looking into the deep blue eyes which seemed to him so innocent and unsophisticated, he had a moment's qualm. Perhaps, after all. . . . Suppose she did not understand, or suppose she. . . . But at this point he pulled himself together abruptly.

"I'd almost forgotten to ask you, sweetheart, if you have a luncheon engagement tomorrow. It's Saturday, you know, and I shall be free by twelve.

She assured him that she wouldn't dream of making any engagement on Saturday except with him.

"Then you can come with me, can't you, out to the country for luncheon with an old friend of mine? She's keen to meet you and I'm sure you'll like each other. There'll be others there, but we can go early and have a chat with her first."

Alice regarded him from under drooping eyelids. "Who is 'her'?"

He laughingly ignored her quoting of the personal pronoun.

"Dearest, I'm shocked at your grammar. My friend is Mrs. Harry Pelham."

Alice drew away from him against a corner of the lounge.

"*That woman!*" Her perfectly molded features and the slight crescendo of her voice were as coldly annihilating as her words.

He stared at her for a moment, unable to grasp the fact that she had insulted him. Then, because he still thought that he loved her, he made instant excuse for her.

"My dear, I don't think you realize that the lady in question is a very old and good friend of mine."

"I know more about your—friendship for Mrs. Pelham than you would ever have told me."

So! Gossip had reached her and she was jealous of Edith! He was engaged, not married, and jealousy subtly flattered him.

"I have no notion what lies may have been retailed to you, my dear girl, but I am proud of my friendship with so fine a woman as Edith Pelham." He spoke without raising his voice, and he lighted a cigarette with deliberated preoccupation in the act.

"Your friendships, those you had before you knew me, are your own affair; but I consider it extremely poor taste for you to introduce to me—far less, take me to the house of a woman who has been—"

His lips remained compressed, but his eyes said as plainly as speech: "Take care!" and she stopped; but her eyes flashed in angry defiance of his warning, and her beauty made a sudden appeal. He softened and bent toward her.

"My dear Alice, don't be foolish and unreasonable. You know that I would not want you to meet any one for whom I did not feel the warmest respect. Won't you try to like my friends and trust my judgment?"

"I refuse, absolutely, to meet Mrs. Pelham."

He looked at her with eyes grown very grave, but he did not speak. His silence irritated her.

"She has been frightfully talked about, not only regarding you, but other men. She is not considered respectable."

He sprang to his feet. "It's a lie, a damn lie!" He did not raise his voice, but it was as if he had shouted the words at her.

She drew back, tense and angry. "How dare you!"

"Whoever told you that told a *damned lie!* There isn't a woman in her set who is better liked and admired than Mrs. Pelham. Some envious hangers-on may have said spiteful things, but it's incredible that you would listen to such talk!"

"See here, Hugh. We might as well understand one another. Do you intend

to continue your friendship with that woman after we are married?"

"Once for all, Alice, do me the favor to drop that insulting reference to Mrs. Pelham as 'that woman.'"

She decided quickly to humor him. "Very well. Do you intend to keep on with Mrs. Pelham after you marry me?"

He grew calmer and spoke almost gently.

"I should hate most awfully, Alice, to cross you in any way; but I most certainly am not going to start life with one woman by utter ingratitude and disloyalty to another woman, who deserves the best that my friendship has to offer her."

"You love her!" Alice flashed the accusation at him.

Again his annoyance was momentarily lulled by the flattering intimation that she was jealous of Edith.

"I asked you to marry me because I love you. Can't you trust me and not demand impossible sacrifices?"

"Sacrifices!"

He saw that she had misunderstood. "Yes, sacrifices of honor and decency."

"Oh, honor!" There was intolerable scorn in the cold smile on her lips.

"Yes—honor, and I'll thank you not to say it in that tone."

"So you refuse to give up Mrs. Pelham?"

"If you choose to put it in that way, yes."

"And you dare to say that you love me!"

He did not answer her. He stood quite still, hands in trousers pockets, looking down at her. A sudden perception came to her that she was losing ground, not gaining it. She studied him with troubled eyes. He was aware of the slow changing of her mood, but it did not soften him. She rose and went close to him.

"Hugh, dear." He did not take his eyes from hers, but his face remained hard and set. She put a hand on his arm. "Let's not quarrel over the question. Let's not discuss it any more now."

She lifted her face as if she wanted him to kiss her, but he made no slightest move of his head. She reached upward and kissed him on the mouth with sudden abandon. His lips gave no response and again she kissed him. He shrank back an imperceptible space. She thought he was still angry with her.

"Hugh. Listen to me, dear. I'm sorry I was cross. Forgive me at once and I'll do something to make you happy. We needn't wait until the fall. I'll marry you very soon, next week if you like, or tomorrow. Kiss me, Hugh, and be good."

He took a step backward, away from her.

"I think we have both made a mistake," he said coldly. "I am sure you do not love me well enough to marry me, and I am sure that I do not love you well enough."

"What!" She stared uncomprehending.

"We are not going to marry," he stated calmly.

"Do you mean—are you actually saying—that you do not intend to marry me?"

"I said that we are not going to marry."

"You mean right now?" she pursued, still unable to realize that anything more potent than anger was at work in him.

"Not now, nor at any time," he said, icily self-possessed.

Understanding and with it outraged pride and rage swept over her. All her training and social veneer gave way before the onslaught of her temper. She became a vulgar little fury and faced him with burning eyes.

"You dare to break your engagement with me! You *dare* to do it! I will tell my father and he will know what to do. And I will tell everybody I know that Edith Pelham is your—"

He put his hand over her mouth, exactly as if she had been a foul-tongued child who could be silenced in no other way.

Then he left the room and, a second later, the house.

## CHAPTER XII

WHEN Brent finished telling Edith what had happened, he drank thirstily the remainder of his highball. As he put down the glass, he asked frowning:

"Do you suppose she'll start some sort of vulgar row?"

"Good gracious no! She might if it were not for her ambition, her climbing instinct. But such a proceeding would kill her socially."

"The wretched vulgarity of it all," he said with gloomy disgust. "Talk about sordidness! Poor Janice was a queen by comparison."

"So I thought, too," commented Edith.

"So you thought! What did you know about Alice Creighton until tonight?"

"A little from report and a little from personal experience. But I'm not going to talk about it now," she said hastily, catching his expression of eager questioning. "I'll tell you about it sometime, dear."

"I daresay, Edith, you thought me a fool, but I really did think I cared enough for Alice to marry her. I know I wasn't madly in love with her. It wasn't even an infatuation—like—well like what I felt for Janice. But I admired and believed in her. I suppose, in a way, it was another case of what you call sex-curiosity. She puzzled me. I realize now that what I felt was a pretty poor imitation of love."

Edith smiled—that whimsical smile which always quickened his tenderness for her. "Be sure when you do marry that you select someone who knows all about this insatiable curiosity of yours and would be prepared for periodic eruptions."

"You're hard on me, old girl. If I marry the right one, there'll be no more eruptions, I assure you."

He stared at her for a moment in silence. She was keenly aware of his scrutiny, but her eyes were lowered to her knitting.

Suddenly he burst out with:

"Good God, I wish *we* could have married, Edith."

She raised her eyes and looked into his without a shadow of self-consciousness.

"You wish we could have?" Her slow repetition of his words, without emphasis, subtly carried to him her meaning.

He leaned toward her and covered one of her hands with his.

"I wish *we could*. That's what I mean. I wish we could, now."

She gently drew away her hand and rose from the lounge.

With nervous fear that he had somehow offended her, he watched her cross the room and bend over her desk. As she walked back toward him, he saw that she held in her hand a long blue envelope. Without a word, she held it out to him. He took it wonderingly and drew out the contents.

At first puzzled and fumbling, then more quickly as his eyes seized its import, he read to the end of the first page. There were several more, but they were of indifference to him. The papers dropped to the floor as he sprang to his feet and stood in front of Edith.

"When did you know?"

"The day after your engagement was announced."

"Good Lord! And when did you start the ball rolling?"

"Last September."

He pondered that. "About the time you put our friendship on its present basis?"

"Yes."

"How did you start the divorce proceedings?"

"Oh, it's a long story! I'll tell you some time. I wrote to Sam Pemberton and asked him to make the necessary enquiries about Harry, which he promptly did with strange and unexpected results. That was what Sam came over here about. He's been a wonderful friend to me, Hugh. And he did it all, knowing that—that I would never marry *him*."

Again she looked unflinchingly into Hugh's dark, earnest eyes.

He was silent for a moment, then: "Why were you so sure that you would never marry him?"

"Because—" she began faintly, then stopped.

"Edith!" He bent over her. "Do you still care a little about me?"

She nodded.

"Can you ever forgive my folly, my utter idiocy of the past few months?" he pleaded.

"Why, my dear!" Her smile was tremulous. "I couldn't have endured having you bound to me in any sense while I was getting my divorce. It would have been indiscreet and—and a bit common, too. I had to take the chance of losing you. Three chances, it proved to be! Besides," her smile changed its quality, "you *know* you've had a rare good time."

"You wretched little tease." He seized her hands and drew her upward, so that she stood with her gray eyes within an inch of his adoring gaze. "I believe you just wanted to see how far I'd swing away from you. You knew I loved you all the time. Why couldn't I stick to Janice and forgive her? Because I loved *you* and was so damnable

unhappy without your love, which I was dead sure I'd lost, that I tried to create a romance out of pretty thin stuff."

With a slow pressure of his arm, he drew her closer to him.

"Darling girl," he whispered. "I love you better than any one on earth. Better than I ever loved you in the old days. Will you marry me tomorrow?"

"Really, Hugh! We'll wait, of course, until your fiancée—" her eyes gently mocked him—"has had time to announce that her engagement has been broken. In common decency, we must wait for that."

"I suppose so," he conceded.

"And remember, I do not renounce my rôle as your *confidante*. After we are married, if my old dear should ever—"

"I'd make a clean breast of it and you'd save me from myself," he declared fatuously. "But it won't be necessary. Your husband would have no excuse for being a philanderer."

He kissed her again. There was a connubial quality in the caress which brought a smile to Edith's lips, the cryptic, self-satisfied smile of her sex in similar circumstances.

(*The End*)



**S**OCIAL Uplift and Public Welfare are Society's ways of washing its hands of the people it doesn't want to know.



**D**URING courtship the man talks. After marriage the woman talks. Then the neighbors talk.



# The Scholar

By George Sinberg

PEOPLE who passed the public library early that morning noticed the old man waiting patiently for the doors to open. No matter how hurried one was, it was impossible not to wonder for a moment that dignity could still invest such a shrunken figure clad in "hand-me-downs" sizes too large. Only the most callous could help feeling the relentless devotion to an ideal that set the stubbled jaw, transfigured the grimy wrinkles on the bony face, flamed in the eyes. Even those who were at first glance inclined to derision of the battered slouch hat and the shoes ashen-white with age, were shamed to respect at the far-away look of a scholar in the old man's eyes, the look of a man contemptuous of the ideals of the cheap,

commercial crowd hurrying to mundane labors.

The library doors swung open at last. The old man entered. Returning the smile of the door-man with a grave inclination of the head he shuffled eagerly over the marble floor to the elevator. Five minutes later, in the public reading-room, he was lovingly carrying a thick volume to a reading-table. His hands trembled, his lips moved in febrile excitement, his eyes glittered as he prepared to continue his work from the point he had left off the previous evening. He wiped his brow.

Then he plunged into Chapter XXV of "Revelations from the Boudoirs of Famous French Cocottes."



# The Rain

By Dorothy Burne

*THE rain with impotent fingers  
Beats on the window pane,  
The wind in a fury lashes,  
Fails and rises again.*

*Close, close I bend to my fire,  
Sheltered and warm, secure,  
But oh, for a heart to brave the rains  
And storm and wind endure!*



# The Wife of a Man of God

*By Kenneth Fuessle*

## I

FOR ten years it had been the custom of the Rev. Samuel Townsend Burt and his wife to take breakfast in the sun-parlor of their home during the spring and summer months. Since failing health had interfered with her going out, Clara Burt had always found this morning hour the best of her day. It was the only incident that assumed the least importance. Excepting Sundays—when usually he was too tired to enjoy company—she was customarily alone at luncheon. Her husband would return for dinner shortly after six, generally accompanied by a guest or two, and invariably by his secretary, Miss Dodworth.

Clara Burt sometimes wondered why their breakfast hour appealed to her. Certainly it was commonplace enough. Her husband would interest himself in the morning paper, seldom exchanging a word with her. Looking up eventually he would ask: "Have you finished your coffee?" then would open the Bible at his side, read the day's chapter, then kneel and make his prayer for a day filled with blessings.

Samuel Townsend Burt's God was an important being; a bestower of all things good; capable, too, of administering severe punishment to those failing to observe His precepts. From the tone of her husband's prayers it was obvious that he was of the small minority who never so failed. Though Samuel Townsend Burt always termed himself "Thy servant," there seemed something of patronage in his carefully enunciated syllables. His wife attributed this to

his familiarity with his God, if she gave it any thought at all.

It was a Sunday morning early in June. After seating his wife Burt propped the clumsy paper before him and mechanically ate his melon. Clear in the still air the sound of early chimes came with unusual distinctness. From her earliest girlhood the chimes had been an emotional experience to Clara Burt. The humming undertone of the deeper bells, at once blended and discordant, used to frighten her in their solemnity. Even now she felt uneasy. The slow harmony striking tone on tone would carry her out of herself. The bells of the First Church would sound the Doxology. From another part of the city would come, measured boom on boom, summons to mass at the Cathedral. Vying with these, sometimes in buzzing discord, lesser bells would add their notes. Almost forgetting her food she would feel the vibrations. Usually the medley of sound seemed melancholy. This morning it seemed wild, slow pagan cadence, stirring as she imagined the throbbing beat of war-drums muffed in a heavy jungle.

There was something fearsome in her response today.

Her husband seemed not to hear them, running through section after section of the thick paper.

"The bells are mad this morning," she said.

"Yes," he replied, not lifting his eyes from the sheet before him, and seeming not to hear.

From the Doxology, the chimes of the First Church changed to a second melody. More and more bells sounded.

The rhythm grew stronger, and in the increased sound the angry buzz of discords became depressing. Clara Burt almost wished she could cover her ears—but knew that the vibrations would continue regardless.

"The tones seem to neutralize each other," she said.

Her husband looked up. For the first time he seemed to notice the clamorous medley.

"It's a pity the other churches don't keep quiet until our chimes have sounded," he said. "I've tried to suggest it several times." He turned to another section of the paper.

That was characteristic of Townsend, she thought—asking the lesser churches to keep silence.

"Have you finished your coffee?" he asked.

"Yes."

He laid the paper aside and opened his Bible. She hardly heard him. The bells were stopping, one by one. His voice seemed unusually loud in the quiet air, now the bells had ceased. He was intoning slowly, in his pulpit voice, reading a chapter in the old testament. Closing the book he pushed his chair back and knelt at the table side.

"—And give us strength this day, Oh Lord, Thy servants in Thy work; Thy people wherever they are. Our thanks are Thine for this past night, and for the years that have gone before. Fill our day with Thy blessings; be with us in our righteous work in Thy name. Amen."

"Has George polished the car, Clara?"

"I think so, dear."

Burt stooped for a moment over his wife's chair, kissing her forehead.

"I suppose you don't feel able to attend services this morning?" he asked.

"I think not," she replied. She had not been able to attend the church for years, yet he always asked.

When the maid came to clear away the dishes Mrs. Burt asked to be helped to the wicker chaise-longue in the south-east corner of the room. This was her daily place. The windows there were

deep, running from ceiling to floor. She could see the street intersection to the right, while just before her ran the trim lawn, terraced to the street level. There were a half-dozen houses in sight; solid, conservative houses much like her own. The whole community seemed at her feet; she knew all of the cars of the neighborhood; would watch the nursemaids each morning as they trundled their charges back and forth through the quiet street. The occupants of the houses she knew but slightly, some only by sight. It was not a neighborhood of informal calls.

Hearing the front door close she watched for her husband. He passed under the windows without looking up, appearing deeply engrossed in his thoughts. Sunday was his important day, of course. She noticed the carefully tailored frock-coat, the soft gray hat. In one hand he carried a gold-headed stick, a gift of hers of a Christmas years ago; in the other his Bible. He walked slowly, thoughtfully, precisely. The chauffeur had opened the car door before Burt reached the curb, and was awaiting instructions. She saw them exchange a few words, then saw her husband step into the car. It moved away easily, silently. There was never confusion of any sort. As the car swung to the left at the corner she caught a final glimpse of Burt sitting comfortably in the tonneau, his hands folded on the head of the stick, meditatively seeing nothing.

In all Bracton there was no more clerical appearing man than her husband. As if basking in the reflected honor of this, she smiled contentedly. It was a distinction; Bracton was an important suburb, so large as to be a city in itself had it not been for the greater city but a few miles distant. If appreciation could be gauged by salary, Bracton appreciated Samuel Townsend Burt greatly.

"Samuel Townsend Burt," the woman said to herself, slowly. Her husband was always referred to in that way in the papers. Thirty years before he had been plain Sam Burt. After that had

passed a few years in which he called himself S. Townsend Burt. Not until they had come to Bracton, twelve years previously, had he used the full name.

The use of the full name had seemed actually to affect the man. It was as if he had assumed ultra-sacerdotal robes. Here in Bracton he was an important person. His days and weeks were always filled with luncheon addresses, conferences, church and inter-church meetings. Frequently he would be called to the greater city for days at a time. His opinion was sought upon many topics. She recalled the steady stream of newspaper correspondents during the last political campaign. Burt had been one of the strong figures in placing certain reform legislation; a strong figure not as a political power in the accepted sense—rather as a power behind the powers. It would not do for him to associate himself with parties, he had said.

Thus in other matters as well. In his earlier days he had been more radical; a flaming disciple of his own views, seeing in them a means of promoting good as he saw it. Such a definite stand now was impossible. His interests were too varied. He might offend one group or the other, and having learned the secret of success, he never offended anyone. His Sunday morning congregations, for instance, would hardly have supported a man careless in his treatment of conservatism. Once each month, on a Sunday afternoon, he would preach in a settlement mission in the industrial district. There, too, it would not have done for him to assume the offensive. As it was, the morning congregation felt that it was offering a brotherly hand to the people of the industrial section, for on such Sundays Samuel Townsend Burt permitted his assistant to conduct the evening services in the First Church. Such evening services were not particularly well attended. His assistant was a nice enough youngster, of course; Burt rather fancied him; but at the same time he could hardly blame his congregation for lack of support.

S. S.—Oct.—3

In the privacy of his study, and sometimes before his wife, Burt occasionally would say "I am the First Church."

Clara Burt was thinking of these things as she sat before her window. Yes—he was the most clerical appearing figure in Bracton. How well his coat hung! She recalled with a smile his first frock-coat. That had been almost thirty years ago, just after their marriage. She could hardly conceive of so much time having passed. She had accompanied him to the tailor's; had helped him choose the broadcloth. They had planned on it for weeks—even months—in advance, saving what money he received as fees for weddings. At that time he had not been widely sought for such officiation.

The important day arrived; a sweltering July Sunday. Burt had called for the coat himself on Saturday afternoon. Together they had sponged the old trousers; Clara had pressed them. Later he would have a new pair, but the coat itself was expensive enough for the time. They compared the two materials carefully, hoping that the difference would not be noticed. She recalled the difficulty he had in tying his white lawn ties; on this morning she balanced the bow for him, patting it into final shape; and he lifted her chin to kiss her as a special reward. "A special dispensation," he had said, smiling. He had called the whole process of dressing that morning the investiture ceremony.

Before the three-quarter mirror of her dresser they admired it together. The mirror was not too good; there was a deep flaw in the lower part. One had to stand a certain way. He moved back and forth several times, both laughing at the distorted reflection.

Very proudly, then, they started for the church, almost regretting that the parsonage was so near as to give them but a moment on the street. They stopped before the door, talking to one of the members. She remembered distinctly the sultry heat of the morning. During his sermon he had found it necessary a number of times to mop his perspiring forehead. With studied ease

he had drawn his handkerchief from the coattail pocket, and had fumbled about in replacing it. Once she had hardly been able to suppress a giggle. She noticed his severe glance from the pulpit.

At the dinner table that noon he had mentioned the incident, gravely serious, fearing that some of the people might have noticed it.

They had always taken their meals together, then. She used to slip out of her pew during the last hymn in order to have dinner prepared by the time he arrived. At that time they had looked forward with anticipation—almost with awe—to the time they would be able to afford a maid. "Not a real maid, of course," they would say; "just a girl to help."

## II

AGAIN the chimes were ringing, announcing the morning service. Mrs. Burt glanced languidly at the tiny clock on the bookshelf before her. It seemed hardly possible that she had been sitting there for an hour and a half: She touched an electric button at her elbow.

The maid entered a moment later.

"You may bring my broth, Ellen," she said.

"Yes, ma'am."

Mrs. Burt glanced casually at the titles of the books on the shelves at her side. Since her long illness she had read continuously, following particularly contemporary material—works on economics, travel, philosophy, as well as late fiction. While in good health she had had little time for reading; now her enjoyment of the books made up in a way for her inability to get about. Only in part, however. Her active life before that time had required meeting many people. She enjoyed the contact with fresh ideas; enjoyed her executive work on committees and in her several clubs. However busy her husband had been then, she seldom missed him.

The first year of her illness had been a difficult time of re-adaptation. Know-

ing her husband's work, she hardly felt justified in claiming much of his time; at times, again, she had hardly been able to stand her loneliness. The experience had aged her unreasonably. She was white-haired, now. Since having trained herself in being impassive, since having succeeded in considering herself satisfied with the inactive existence, she had become unusually tolerant, mellowed. At first her face had shown the struggle with her unforgettable active self; now the lines were softened. There was no longer a trace of impatience. She became more considerate of the people in her household. Her husband, important, self-satisfied, pompous—seemed just a boy. Frequently she would ask herself why she should expect him to take an interest in her quiet home-life; a life filled with hours of reading in the sun-room, thoughts, friendly little impersonal interests in the people who passed under her windows.

As she sat thinking, she saw for the first time her husband in a different rôle; she saw him as a practical, smug business-man, handling his church as one would handle any other profitable concern. For the first time she realized a possible significance in the astute egotism of his "I am the First Church." Was that his real attitude, she wondered. It seemed at once to cheapen him in her sight. What was he, really? Merely a verbose popinjay, filled with sonorous platitudes, careful not to endanger his position, giving flat, pedantic sermons each week? Or was he still the thinking passionate boy she had first known, more tolerant now, with his broader experience, kindly perhaps in his services to his people? If that were so, how could she account for the man whom she saw only in the mornings; the man who interested himself in his paper, said very little, read the daily chapter and asked for days filled with blessings? A tinge of irony showed itself in her smile. Her days, for instance, were they filled with blessings? —her friendless days, with only an infrequent exchange of word with anyone other than her servants.

She felt that she was unjustified in pitying herself. Her life was not so empty after all. She turned to the books again. None of them seemed to interest her this morning.

When Ellen returned for the tray, Mrs. Burt stopped her.

"Has George brought the car back, Ellen?"

"Yes ma'am."

It was the custom to have the car returned to the house whenever possible. To have the car at the disposal of his wife Burt considered a worthy contribution to her welfare. The matter was retroactive; Burt was looked upon as a very considerate man indeed for doing so.

"I think I shall ask you to help me dress, Ellen. —And will you accompany me? I have decided to attend services this morning. I've not seen the new church, you know. I'm really feeling quite well. We'll stay just for the sermon."

"Yes ma'am." The girl tried not to show surprise.

Leaning on Ellen's arm Mrs. Burt went to her room. While dressing she wondered why she had decided to hear her husband's sermon. So long a time had passed since attending church that she found herself happy in anticipation. The very anticipation seemed to strengthen her. She actually felt better than she had for months. She looked forward to the drive, too.

Ellen hardly knew her mistress; she seemed suddenly younger.

"Does Dr. Burt know you're coming, ma'am?"

"No, Ellen. I'd rather he wouldn't. —I just wanted to see the church. I don't think I shall meet anyone I know. Most of my friends are no longer here. We won't tell anyone." There was almost a suggestion of sadness in her tones. For the first time in her seven years of invalid life she felt the loneliness of her position.

With the help of the chauffeur and Ellen she walked slowly to the car. The effort for a moment seemed too great;

but having started she was going to carry out her plans.

"Drive slowly, George," she said.

### III

IN spite of the hurried pounding of her heart resulting from the unusual exertion, she gave her full attention to the streets through which they passed. There were many changes since last she had been out. Bracton was constantly growing, and seven years made a noticeable difference.

Nearing the building, Ellen said "This is the new church, ma'am." Mrs. Burt recognized it from the pictures. The classic Gothic lines appealed to her; it was a vast place of gray freestone. From the two corners of the façade rose square topped towers, sturdy and well-proportioned. The general effect evidenced the desire of the architect to re-create as nearly as possible the lines of the cathedral of Notre Dame.

Mrs. Burt recalled her husband's management of funds for the new church; he had worked on the basis of selling shares. Among the wealthy parishioners he had found no difficulty in raising the half million dollars necessary. For a time she had even thought that the selling of the shares interested him more than the building itself. Burt had little appreciation of architecture. He had considered himself fortunate in procuring the services of the most successful architect in the nearby city. "We can't limit expenses," he told his trustees. "The First Church must be a first church in every sense; it must surpass every building in Bracton; it must be luxurious—with the simple luxury of good taste; it must be worthy of its congregation." He had repeated the conversation to his wife.

Supported by Ellen, Mrs. Burt slowly ascended the broad, low steps, entering the main doorway. A carefully groomed usher, in morning-coat, gray-gloved stepped forward to meet them.

"You have a chair, madam?" he asked.

"No. Could you be so good as to

find a place for me somewhere in the rear? I must leave early."

"The final anthem is just being finished, madam. Will you seat yourself here in the vestibule for a moment? It is not our custom to interrupt the music," he explained, and indicated a nearby chair.

Such a custom was new to Mrs. Burt. She wondered did the present-day worshippers customarily cause so much commotion in entering their churches to require such treatment. She noticed the thick carpet in the corridor, the carved woodwork, elaborate in its intricacy of design. From within came the rumbling notes of the organ; occasionally she could hear one voice rising clearly above the others.

The music ceased suddenly, and the usher opened the broad swing-doors. He found a place for Mrs. Burt on the aisle, second row from the back. There were no pews in the new First Church. Each seat was placed separately, well-upholstered, designed for the greatest comfort. Resting her elbows on the carved arm of her chair Mrs. Burt settled back easily.

Her eyes becoming accustomed to the dim light she studied the height of the nave, noticing the sheer sweep of Gothic arches from pillars on either side. The soft light was filtered through colored glass; the windows were in deep shades of red and blue and purple, touched here and there with amber; tasteful conventional designs. Her first impression was one of restfulness; then she felt that the effect of luxury seemed almost too obvious. She wondered if possibly the long years in the simplicity of her room might not have caused much of the feeling.

Ushers were passing quietly through the aisles during the offertory. She noticed the full baskets of crumpled bills, with hardly any silver, as they passed her. She recalled her husband's early difficulty in his smaller churches in asking for contributions. The whole series of observations so far had tended to make her feel utterly a stranger in this new and ornate type of church.

Even the people about her came in for a part of her attention. They were sleek, well-dressed, impersonally taking part in the services, careful that they should appear a definite part of it all.

All of this was forgotten when across the distance from the pulpit to her rear seat came the sonorous tones of her husband's voice, sure and clearly modulated, as he announced his text. The loose folds of his robe accentuated the dignity of the occasion. She had never seen him so attired.

"The Lord thy God is a jealous God," he was saying, and paused. The congregation was making itself more comfortable.

Mrs. Burt's God had never been jealous. She had no too definite a concept of her God. Years ago her husband's conception had been hers. "A kindly Father," he had said, then. Sometimes Mrs. Burt wondered at the kindness of God. Mostly, however, she was satisfied in letting her husband trouble himself with the definition.

"More than ever today," her husband was explaining, "the God of the Christian is jealous. He sees into the hearts of His people as never before. He sees their selfishness, and is moved to wrath; He sees their egoism, and is free in His punishments. Today there is too much self-satisfaction; too much seeking for personal ends. There is less and less of the humble attitude; less and less deference and respect."

To Mrs. Burt the ponderous sentences seemed mostly sound. His wife wondered exactly how much of himself he took seriously. Her early training had been strict, unquestioning. Her life's experiences behind her now, she questioned more and more. The rituals of the church from which she had so long been separated, appeared for the first time formal and wordful. Too much was made of appearance, she thought.

A puffy old gentlemen a few seats away was nodding sleepily; occasionally his jaw would drop, and his heavy breathing was becoming the gurgle of a dozing man. Perhaps the jealous God was wrathful at so obvious a lack of at-

tention to the words of His servant. It hardly seemed so. Perhaps the jealous wrath had been somewhat placated by the half-folded bill the man had slipped into the basket.

"—It is well that we give to His work through our organizations," her husband was continuing. "In these days of activity, of forceful progress, such is our duty. There is no duty but Godliness. Life is but a moment in the sight of God. To be kindly, to be considerate, to be charitable: these are the pleasing things in God's sight."

Mrs. Burt was not questioning now; rather was thinking that thus far her husband had said nothing. Perhaps she had missed something. Surely there seemed to be no connection in his sermon thus far. She must attend more closely.

The ringing banality of his platitudes, if she had not felt their sterility, might possibly have reached her had she not known the man. True enough, these were days of activity and supposed progress. Was it necessary, she wondered, to include such a statement in a sermon? In his home life she knew her husband hardly ever to deal in anything but the obvious. So here, too, it seemed.

Suppose that life were but a moment in the sight of God? What of that? Did it require thunderous expounding? —A moment, perchance—but her past seven years in their endless monotony? Rather an age.

What was new in the statement of kindness, consideration, charity? She could not but apply the measure to her husband. Was his work and his life, then, so pleasing to his jealous God as to warrant an exception in his case? In his treatment of her had he endeavored always to please this wrathful Deity? Perhaps it was kindly of him to breakfast with her; perhaps it was considerate of him to give her the benefit of a daily chapter in the bible, and a carefully worded prayer asking for days filled with blessings; perhaps he was charitable.

He demanded charity in others; there

was no question of that. Such might be the duty of an humble servant.

"Let our worship be simple. Let no man question what God has ordained." The voice from the pulpit vibrated in its fullness. "Let us accept all things meekly, bowing to a greater will than our own. Let us be children in our unbounded faith."

Was her husband's worship so simple, then, she asked herself. Did he accept things meekly? Had his fanatic interest in his recent crusade been the interest of a meek man? —Or perhaps the crusade had been the will of God, and her husband, possibly, had been His weapon.

To be children in unbounded faith. Was that possible? How was such belief related to the struggling life of the people about her? In what did most of them have faith? In God? For the first time she doubted. God was more of a shield than a divinity in the progress of the present time. She doubted the more. To be children! Yes, to be childlike would be necessary; to have such faith would require the imagination, the awe, the fear of a child for the unknown. Such fear was not hers. In her years of resignation had she felt resigned to the will of this jealous God? Hardly. She had simply submitted to circumstance. Perhaps God was working a punishment in her case. That was an explanation of some sort, but rather valueless.

"—It is pleasing to God that His people should gather for worship; it is His law."

Well enough, she thought. —But had she not worshipped as well in her secluded room? If God were displeased, she thought, He had brought the displeasure upon Himself. She wondered did not this God cause most of His own displeasure anyway. During her days of good health Mrs. Burt had been as militant a figure as her husband in the work of the church. Now she wondered at her former interest. These sleepy, well-fed people, looking at their watches, nodding wisely; were they vitally interested?

She looked at the girl at her side. Ellen was tracing the carvings on the chair-back before her.

"You know your duties. Abide in them. Carry with you through the week the thoughts of this morning. Remember meekness, remember kindness; remember always the jealousy of a just God in His infinitude of wisdom; remember His thunderbolts of righteous wrath. . . ."

Wide-eyed, pale in the new knowledge of so frightful a God, a bright-faced little fellow at Mrs. Burt's side was twisting his handkerchief nervously. Her tolerant sympathy went to him. She longed to take him in her arms; longed to tell him of her kindly God. —To tell him? What? Was she so sure, then, of her kindly God as to convince others of His existence? Oddly she saw God in a new light; her vision of a beneficent Father changed to chaotic nothingness whence shortly came a scowling aged figure of clenched fists. She was frightened at herself.

"Let us pray."

She bowed her head.

"Bless us through this week, O Father. Strengthen our cause in Thy name. Let this hour be one of refreshment and rest in Thee. Amen."

From all through the auditorium came sounds of coughing, of people clearing their throats. Programs were rustled, pages turned, as the number of the closing hymn was sought. Mrs. Burt turned to Ellen.

"We will return at once. I want to have the car here in time for the doctor."

They left their places with as little confusion as possible.

The chauffeur was at the door, waiting to assist Ellen in supporting Mrs. Burt. She was tired; worn out by the unusual exertion; as much worn out by her feeling of discomfort, by her newly discovered questioning attitude. She almost regretted having made the effort. She had accomplished nothing. It would have been better had she remained in the sunny corner of her room, filled with the comforting illusions of her past years.

#### IV

So engrossed was Mrs. Burt in her thoughts that she hardly noticed anything on the drive home. Unless she had heard with her own ears she would have disbelieved that so vast a change could have occurred in so few years of a man's life. Surely Townsend could not take his religion very seriously if this morning's sermon had been an example. —What if he were sincere, thinking that actually he had offered new interpretations of their mutual faith? Impossible, she told herself, in the same moment. No. He had simply lost himself in his love of pulpit exposition. Those empty phrases; the stale platitudes. . . .

If he no longer held to their faith, if his only interest lay in his own wordy expounding of commonplaces, what then? Could she respect him? Was this self-centered, accomplished speaker of nothings a priest and a servant? She smiled wanly.

Arrived at the house she went directly to her room, and with Ellen's assistance slipped into a dressing-gown.

"Tell Dr. Burt that I am not feeling well. I shall not be down for luncheon. You may bring my tray here. Should I be asleep, do not awaken me, please."

"Yes ma'am."

She lay on her couch in the darkened room, relaxing after the strain. She was tired. For the time she dropped all thoughts of the morning. So many things troubled her that in a few moments she found herself tensely thinking again. Her brow was contracted with the effort. She seemed unusually pale and worn there in the half-light.

What availed her thinking? Her own beliefs were firm enough. —But her husband, the suave speaker of the morning, seemed almost a stranger. Did she know him so little, then?

Were her beliefs firm? Had she any beliefs at all? Suddenly she seemed to see life as a mere fantasy; a dream, oddly filled with suffering and disappointments. The past slipped by, forgotten; for the first time in her experi-

ence she saw no future. If there were a hereafter it was something indistinct, almost grotesque. How had she conceived of life beyond life? Now the thought seemed empty, ridiculous. As for everything else, there seemed something hateful in it all.

Her smug husband was an automaton. Beyond that there was nothing. They had drifted farther and farther apart; even before her illness they had become strangers to each other. There had been no exchange of confidences for years. Until now she had attributed it to the busy life of Dr. Burt. It was more than that. Mere busy days could never have separated them in this way.

Had she loved him at one time? Almost desperately she tried to recall incidents that would prove her questions harsh and futile nonsense. What was wrong? Perhaps merely the nervous strain of the morning. She seemed tense and trembling. She was experiencing so many new sensations, lying here, that she hardly knew herself. For the first time she experienced fear. Heretofore she had easily quieted her mind with accepted concepts. Now there was nothing accepted; nothing but question upon question, stretching into dim spaces that seemed actually to exist in her mind. It was a feeling of being lost; a feeling of intense longing; of lonesomeness.

In a detached way she heard voices in the rooms below. Dr. Burt had returned; several others were with him. They were at luncheon now; the hum of their talk seemed from a great distance. She could distinguish no word.

Before her eyes played the scene of the morning; the softly-lit church in its calm luxury; the figure of her husband, gowned and impressive, across the stretch of the auditorium. She heard again his modulated tones, balanced and regular, proclaiming—nothing! Nothing! —That was it. Talk. Empty words in endless smooth cascade. No sincerity, no feeling; simply talk. —And that, perhaps, was a day filled with blessings.

She wished almost tearfully that

she had not attended the services.

There was nothing for her, now. She foresaw their life together. It would continue in the customary monotonous ruts. They would breakfast together, he reading his paper, she eating silently; putting aside his paper then he would open the bible, then would kneel at the table-side. He would pray. To whom? Perhaps it was habit, ritual.

Her thoughts became more and more confused.

\* \* \*

THE room was almost in total darkness. Realizing that she had slept, she almost regretted having awakened. She noticed that Ellen, finding her asleep, had thrown a blanket over her; Ellen must have done that when she had brought the tray.

At once her troubling thoughts returned. With conscious endeavor she put them aside. To what end were they? To what end was anything . . .

Through the partly opened windows she heard the evening chimes. The sounds gained strength, then faded, then swelled on the light breeze. They were sweet in the evening; there was nothing of the discord of the morning; they seemed infinitely far away.

She heard someone ascending the stairs; there came a soft knock at the door.

"Come." —It was Ellen, likely.

"Are you awake, Clara?" Dr. Burt crossed the room quietly. "—Too bad you weren't with us at luncheon. Dr. Henderson was here from the city. A splendid man; none greater."

"I'm sorry, dear. I should liked to have met him." She recalled the name as one frequently mentioned by her husband.

Burt drew up a chair, seated himself for a moment. He leaned back, closing his eyes.

"I must leave for the church again. I'm very tired this evening."

Mrs. Burt looked at him, studying him slowly. Yes, he seemed tired. Resting here at her side he was far from

the ponderous figure of the morning. He seemed as once older, and a tired boy. She reached out for his hand, surprised at the limpness of his fingers.

"Henderson came up to me just after the sermon this morning. He was enthusiastic; thought it the best thing he had heard in months; said he envied my ability. 'That's real preaching, Burt,' he said."

She held his tired hand in hers for several minutes. There were no longer troubling thoughts; nothing but the warmth of affection that had carried them through their thirty years of married life. In her voice was sincerity, a wealth of encouragement.

"I'm sure it must have been," she said.



## Wait Awhile

By Jeannette Marks

### I

*If you would know my mother-heart,  
Then wait awhile, be still;  
Watch for the settling dusky light,  
The silence, on the hill;  
And wait awhile, be still.*

### II

*Love, heed the clap of little hands,  
Of leaves upon my trees;  
And hear the traveling of the wind,  
The moving of the seas;  
Then wait awhile, be still.*

### III

*If you would know my mother-heart,  
But watch the wasting day!  
The wind steps softly in the corn,  
The light slips to the hill;  
Love, wait awhile, be still.*



# Répétition Générale

By George Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken

## § 1

**T**HE *Man and His Shadow*.—Every man, whatever his actual qualities, is credited with and judged by certain general qualities that are supposed to appertain to his sex, particularly by women. Thus man the individual is related to Man the species, often to his damage and dismay. Consider my own case. I am by nature one of the most orderly of mortals. I have a place for every article of my personal property, whether a Bible or a cocktail-shaker, an undershirt or an eye-dropper, and I always keep it where it belongs. I never drop cigar-ashes on the floor. I never upset a waste-basket. I am never late for trains. I never run short of collars. I never go out with a purple necktie on a blue shirt. I never fail to show up for dinner without telephoning or telegraphing. Yet the women who are cursed by God with the care of me maintain and cherish the fiction that I am an extremely careless and even hoggish fellow—that I have to be elaborately nursed, supervised and policed—that the slightest relaxation of vigilance over my everyday conduct would reduce me to a state of helplessness and chaos, with all my clothes mislaid, half of my books in the ash-can, my mail unanswered, my face unshaven, and my office not unlike a Socialist headquarters after a raid by the police. It is their firm theory that, unaided by superior suggestion, I'd wear one shirt six weeks, and a straw hat until Christmas. They never speak of my workroom save in terms of horror, though it is actually the

most orderly room in my house. Weekly I am accused of having lost all my socks and handkerchiefs, though they are in my clothes-press all the while. At least once a month formal plans are discussed for reorganizing my whole mode of life, that I may not sink into irremediable carelessness, inefficiency and barbarism.

I note that many other men lie under the same benign espionage and misrepresentation—in fact, nearly all men. It is my firm belief that nine-tenths of them are really very orderly. The business of the world is managed by getting order into it, and the feeling for discipline thus engendered is carried over into domestic life. I know of very few men who ever drop ashes on the dining-room rug, or store their collars in their cigar-boxes, or put on brown socks with their dress-clothes, or forget to turn off the water after they have bathed, or neglect to keep dinner engagements—and most of these few, I am firmly convinced, do it because their women-folk expect it of them, because it would cause astonishment and dismay if they refrained. I myself, more than once, have deliberately hung my hat on an electrolier, or clomped over the parquetry with muddy shoes, or gone out in a snowstorm without an overcoat, or come down to dinner in a ragged collar, or filled my shirt-box with old copies of the *Congressional Record*, or upset a bottle of green ink, or used Old Dutch Cleanser for shaving, or put olives into Jack Rose cocktails, or gone without a hair-cut for three or four weeks, or dropped an expensive beer *Seidel* upon

the hard concrete of my cellar-floor in order to give a certain necessary color to the superstition of my oafishness. If I failed to do such things now and then I'd become unpopular, and very justly so, for nothing is more obnoxious than a human being who is always challenging and correcting the prevailing view of him. Even now I make no protest; I merely record the facts. On my death-bed, I daresay, I shall carry on the masquerade. That is to say, I shall swallow a clinical thermometer or two, upset my clam-broth over my counterpane, keep an Ouija board and a set of dice under my pillow and, maybe, at the end, fall clumsily out of bed.

### § 2

*Woman and Beauty.*—I incline to think that women overestimate the importance of mere physical beauty in their eternal conspiracy against the liberty of men. It is a lure, but it is certainly not the only one, nor even, perhaps, the most important one. The satisfaction that a man gets out of succumbing to a woman of noticeable pulchritude is chiefly the rather banal satisfaction of parading her before other men. He likes to show her off as he likes to show off his expensive automobile or his big door-knob factory. It is her apparent costliness that is her principal charm. Her beauty sets up the assumption that she was sought eagerly by other men, some of them wealthy, and that it thus took a lot of money or a lot of skill to obtain the monopoly of her.

But very few men are so idiotic that they are blind to the hollowness of such satisfactions. A husband, after all, spends relatively few hours of his life parading his wife, or even solemnly contemplating her beauty. What engages him far more often is the unromantic business of living with her—of listening to her conversation, of trying to fathom and satisfy her whims, of detecting and counteracting her plots against his ego, of facing with her the dull hazards and boredoms of everyday life. In the dis-

charge of this business personal beauty is certainly not necessarily a help; on the contrary, it may be a downright hindrance, if only because it makes for the hollowest and least intelligent of all forms of vanity. Of infinitely more value is a quality that women too often neglect, to wit, the quality of simple amiability. The most steadily charming of all human beings, male or female, is the one who is tolerant, unprovocative, good-humored, kind. A man wants a show only intermittently, but he wants peace and comfort every day. And to get them, if he is sagacious, he is quite willing to sacrifice scenery.

### § 3

*De Vanitas.*—Mr. E. O. Hoppé, the English photographer, engaged recently in preserving my loveliness for posterity, entertained me the while with the philosophy that nowhere, as before the camera, does man so greatly betray his personal vanity. I doubt this. A man's vanity takes him to a photographer's, but, once he is in the place, he feels himself, as nowhere else, the inferior of a moving picture actor.

### § 4

*The South Again.*—Many of the curious phenomena which engage and delight the psychologist in the late Confederate States of America are probably explicable as effects of a tradition of truculence operating upon a population that is congenitally timorous and even poltroonish. That tradition comes down from the Southern aristocracy of the old days, which bred it as a part of the general tradition of feudalism. The old-time Southerner of the ruling caste was primarily a cavalier, *i. e.*, a cavalry-officer, and cultivated all the qualities that go with the trade. He carried arms and knew how to use them; he cultivated a chivalrous attitude toward women; he was quick to resent injuries, and enjoyed combat; he tried to model himself, not upon Cromwell, but upon the Cid. This tradition, as I say, survives, but

the actual cavalier is almost extinct. In his place, making his gestures and trying absurdly to think his thoughts, there is the Southerner of today, a man usually of very humble origin and often of true proletarian instincts. His great-grandfather was not a gentleman, but a farm laborer, and very probably one bound by terms which made him almost a slave. When, now, this scion of an inferior stock, moved by what he regards as his duty as a Southerner, rolls his eye in the best Chevalier Bayard manner, reaches for his weapon and tries to scare the vulgar to death—when this spectacle is unfolded the effect is not unlike that of a sheep trying to bark.

No actual gallantry is left in the South, save as the private possession of a small minority of surviving first-rate Southerners. The thing that the new lords of the soil have on tap is simply a puerile imitation of it. In place of duelling they lynch. Instead of the old high tone of controversy there is nothing but doggery brawling. These new Southerners, at bottom, are no better and no worse than any other men of their class. If they followed their natural instincts they would be no more obnoxious than the newly emancipated and enriched proletarians of any other region. But the fatal tradition of truculence lies upon them, and, yielding to it, they become nuisances. It is as if so many Russian *muzhiks* should put on horn-rimmed spectacles and set up shop as philosophers.

### § 5

*Experience Is a Wise Teacher.*—From a review of George M. Cohan by Mr. Walter Prichard Eaton in "The American Stage of Today", published in 1908:

When Mr. Cohan comes forth and attempts to apologize for the crudeness and triteness and absurd childishness of his play by asking the audience not to take him seriously, he is in reality publicly confessing his failure and his unfitness to claim consideration as a dramatic author. . . . His work is futile, his labors barren, because he has dis-

closed neither the human sympathy nor the intelligent observation, nor the technical skill truthfully to depict men and women when their hearts are touched and to set them in a plausible and sustained story. . . .

From a review of George M. Cohan by Mr. Walter Prichard Eaton in *Vanity Fair*, published in 1921:

. . . a decade of the lively plays of G. M. Cohan, with their brisk, homely humor and surface naturalism, had taught us all to enjoy the local flavor in our drama. Cohan, more than any other one man, has taken the technique of farce—the swift succession of incident with mounting suspense and complexity—and adapted it to the task of creating the surface illusion of reality and revealing character. . . . If America has made any technical contribution to the theater since the negro minstrels it is this development of farce technique into a popular weapon for realism and character study. He [Craven] has written a popular drama in the direct line of our living, unliterary plays, in the line of . . . Cohan's comedies. We shall never have a literary drama, which is also a living popular drama, except it comes by this channel.

### § 6

*Mythical Anthropophagi.*—One often encounters references in literature (particularly in the marshmallow literature of the women's pages of the newspapers) to women who are man-haters, but who has ever met one in real life? As for me, I doubt that such a monster has ever actually existed. There are, of course, women who spend a great deal of time denouncing and reviling men, but these are certainly not genuine man-haters: they are simply gals who have done their damndest to snare men, and failed. Of such sort are the majority of carnivorous suffragettes of the sex-hygiene and birth-control species. The rigid limitation of offspring, in fact, is chiefly advocated by women who run no more risk of having unwilling motherhood forced upon them than so many mummies of the Tenth Dynasty. All their unhealthy interest in such noisome matters, in fact, has behind it a subconscious yearning to attract the attention of men, who are supposed to be partial to all enterprises that are diffi-

cult or forbidden. But certainly the enterprise of dissuading such a propagandist from her gospel would not be difficult, and I know of no law forbidding it.

I'll begin to believe in man-haters the day I am introduced to a woman who has definitely and finally refused an offer of marriage from a man who is of her own station in life, able to support her, unafflicted by any loathsome disease, and of reasonably decent aspect and manners—in brief, a man who is thoroughly eligible. I doubt that any such woman exists in Christendom. Whenever one comes to confidential terms with an unmarried woman, of course, she favors one with a long chronicle of the men she has refused to marry, greatly to their grief. But unsentimental cross-examination, at least in my experience, always develops the plain fact that every one of these men suffered from some obvious and intolerable disqualification. Either he had a wife already and was vague about his ability to get rid of her, or he was drunk when he made his proposal and forgot it the next day, or he was a bankrupt, or he was old and decrepit, or he was young and plainly idiotic, or he had diabetes or a bad heart, or his relatives were impossible, or he believed in spiritualism, or the New Thought, or democracy, or the Baconian theory, or some other such nonsense. Restricting the thing to men palpably eligible, I believe thoroughly that no sane woman has ever actually muffed a chance. Now and then, perhaps, a miraculously fortunate gal has two chances simultaneously, and has to lose one. But they are never both *good* chances; one is always a flivver, thrown in in the telling to make the bourgeoisie marvel.

One often hears of women who have renounced marriage in order to devote themselves to some brummagem art or profession, usually a banal branch of the uplift. These damsels are all frauds. Given a suitable man, with money in the bank, a facile flow of conversation, a well set-up figure, clean clothes and a mastery of the elements of

conventional love-making, and even the most desperately self-consecrated of these heroines would throw up her Mission and marry him at four days' notice. This fact, it seems to me, marks off one of the salient differences between men and women. Men, I believe, are quite as sentimental as women, and perhaps a great deal more so, but their sentimentality seldom makes them overestimate mere marriage. The reason is plain enough: they have less to gain by it than women gain—and sentimentality, like every other human weakness, is chiefly grounded on self-interest. At any rate, one doesn't often hear of a man sacrificing his career, even as a baseball player, a hide and tallow broker or a Congressman, in order to marry. True enough, it is seldom required of him, but even when it is required—say when a professional politician marries a respectable woman—he usually resists. Public opinion among men is against his yielding; he would be sneered at if he did so. But women never sneer at a virgin who throws over her job, her training and her Divine Call in order to grab a good husband.

### § 7

*Christian Progress.*—Wandering some time ago into a Broadway theater given over to more or less bawdy leg-shows, I was arrested in the lobby by a series of mural decorations representing various fair creatures in very scanty dress. These pictures, as I say, arrested me. The girls depicted seemed to be far more lovely than any I should be likely to see on the stage of the house, and they had on rather less clothes. So I viewed them comfortably and leisurely, and then left the place. As I passed out it occurred to me that I had not ascertained the name of the artist. Stepping back, I found it displayed boldly upon every panel. The first part of it was *Wesley!*

Well, I can match it. I know a satirical colored washerwoman in Maryland who had her eldest son christened Thomas Dixon Jackson.

## § 8

*On Censorships.*—The various censorships that hag-ride all manifestations of intellectual enterprise and originality in the United States are bad enough, God knows, but I often marvel that they are not worse. The Philistine right-thinkers obviously have quite enough power to enforce any sort of censorship, however extravagant, that happens to appeal to their degraded tastes. The state legislatures leap whenever they crack the whip; the abominable poltroons and scoundrels of Congress tremble at their whisper; the executive arm is enthusiastically on their side, if only because censorships make plenty of jobs; and the courts have long since adjourned the Bill of Rights. There is, in brief, no impediment, legislative or judicial, to the most idiotic prohibitions imaginable. If the psychopathic morons who now rule the Republic were to decide tomorrow that drinking coffee was immoral and against God, Congress would pass an act forbidding it within six months, Dr. Harding would appoint an ass to enforce the act, the ass would get together a mob of rogues to help him, all the lower courts would uphold them in their swineries, and in the course of a year or two the senile worthies of the Supreme Court of the United States, with Brandeis and Holmes, JJ., dissenting, would solemnly decide that the whole monkey-business was constitutional. Yet it is not done. I begin to believe that the reigning maniacs, after all, have some sense and decency in them, and even, perhaps, a trace of humor. They forbid all us subjects and slaves of the International Sunday-school Lessons to read Dreiser's "The 'Genius'" or Cabell's "Jürgen"; they might just as easily forbid us to read Dreiser's "A Hoosier Holiday" or Cabell's genealogical works. They forbid us to witness murders or seductions in the movie-parlors; they could, if they would, forbid us to witness poker-playing or kissing. They prohibit advocating making the government

Bolshevik; why don't they prohibit advocating making it honest?

I have, being polite, ascribed this abstinence to a hidden decency. Perhaps I am wrong. It may be that what keeps the fanatics within bounds is precisely what causes the rest of the American people to obey their existing fiats so docilely. I allude to the quality which becomes, more and more, the distinguishing mark of the free-born American. I allude to the interesting quality of cowardice.

## § 9

*The Aspect of Women.*—It is one of Nature's protective measures to present a woman to a man always more or less in the image of her as she was when he first kissed her. Thus, a husband rarely grows conscious of his wife as an aging and increasingly homely woman, but continues to see her more or less as he saw her during the early years of their acquaintance. He notices a few changes in her, of course, but in general the woman his eyes observe is very largely his early sweetheart with mere overtones of maturity. The same thing holds true in the case of other girls whom a man has known and loved; always he continues to regard them more or less as female Peter Pans. If Nature did not exercise this subtle dodge, half the husbands in the world would murder the women they married, and bachelors would be not one-half so vain as they are.

## § 10

*Another Bogus Martyr.*—Many great lakes and estuaries of crocodile tears are being shed over the current effort, so gaudily carried on by Boards of Education, college presidents, "patriotic" newspapers and other such agents of imbecility, to put down political radicalism among school-teachers. Every few weeks the Liberal weeklies report another poor pedagogue fired for speaking respectfully in class of Debs or Marx, or even of Thomas Jefferson. In

New York the school-children are deliberately encouraged to draw out their teachers—most of whom seem to be Yiddish intellectuals from the East Side, and hence full of politico-sociological heresies—, and so bring them for trial before the Holy Synod. The aim seems to be to force all of them to embrace and preach nothing save ideas that have the *nihil obstat* of such patriotic thinkers as the Hon. Cal Coolidge, Col. George Harvey, Dr. Otto Kahn, the chief witch-burners of the American Legion, the Hon. Frank A. Munsey, and the editor of the *New York Times*. This necessity is depicted as a great spiritual hardship, and we are asked to weep over the anguish of the poor pedagogues.

As for me, I'd weep more copiously if I could convince myself (a) that the purpose of school-teaching is to generate a free play of ideas, and (b) that teachers as a class have any ideas worth hearing. I question both propositions. The actual purpose of school-teaching is to dose the immature with the ideas that happen to prevail among the generality of respectable and stupid folk at the moment of teaching. Whether those ideas constitute the official doctrine of the Prussian military state or the official doctrine of the Yiddo-American shopkeepers' state—whether they are selected and approved by Junkers with clanking swords or by Harvey, Coolidge, Ochs, the Roosevelt family, Henry Ford, Tom Lamont, A. Mitchell Palmer, and Potash and Perlmutter—it is all one. The important thing is that they are chosen, not for their reasonableness but for their safety, and that millions are spent upon inculcating them in order precisely that the children to whom they are taught may become docile slaves of the masters set over them by God. This is the sole aim of school-teaching. The child of a garbage-hauler is taught to read, not that he may hatch ideas of his own, for he lacks congenitally the apparatus for it, but simply that he may be facilely supplied from time to time with whatever ideas are currently orthodox.

The notion that teachers have ideas of their own—that their beliefs in politics and economics are measurably more intelligent than those of Ochs, Coolidge, and Potash and Perlmutter—this I am constrained to reject equally. School-teachers, as a class, are actually extremely ignorant; worse, they are usually very conventional and stupid. The day I hear of one who refuses to teach the orthodox doctrine, say, about James Russell Lowell, or Washington's New Jersey campaign, or the cases in English grammar, or the causes of the late war, or the prevailing piffle in the matter of sex hygiene—on that day I shall begin to believe that they suffer genuinely when they are forced to teach the orthodox doctrine about capitalism.

### § 11

*Literature in Los Angeles.*—Copy of a letter recently received by the editors of this magazine from a literary gentleman in Los Angeles.

DEAR SIRS:

I have the financial handling of a story by \_\_\_\_\_, Pen name,

I consider this story entirely out of the ordinary, and in a class to itself. Founded on reality but camouflaged to appear as fiction, to shield the real participants. Revealing financial, social, material and spiritual happenings of daily life, among classes, shielded from the masses.

Also reveals evidence that certain happenings were pre-arranged by influences of invisible forces of Divine Power; which are today disturbing the minds of all thinking people, up and down the line, from the RANK MEDICAL ATHEIST, to the Iron clad old line orthodox blind faith believers in their burning brimstone swimming pool—VS— their milk and honey PARADICE WAREHOUSE, within the pearly gates, guarded by saint Peter.

This manuscript from the unknown Author, \_\_\_\_\_, pen name, contains about 35,000 words.

The Author has tried to so word and brief his manuscript, with sufficient Gaps and openings, so it can be trimmed-up, swelled-up, changed and arranged to fit three separate interests;—

1st—So it can be changed to suit most any periodical.

2nd—So it can be swelled-up with flowery ingredients for an attractive book, which will sell to all classes.

3rd—So it will be attractive for the movies. The Author believes that with his assistance, this can be made the most attractive, cleanest and grandest production ever thrown on the screen.

Therefore the Author desires to first offer some periodical the right to its publication in that periodical only; the Author retaining all his other rights for its publication in book, movies & etc.

Are you willing to consider only the right for your publication in your periodical; the Author retaining all his other rights? If so, I will send you the manuscript by registered mail, for your consideration, soon as it can be properly type written, and stamps for its return, if not accepted.

Should this, the Authors first attempt at camouflaging actuality into fiction, prove successful and interesting, then he can relate more of the happenings to the same Duelists, that followed, which will be evidence of greater interest, to the disturbed thinker, about the possibility of Divine influences.

Thanking you in advance for an early reply; and hoping that it will be encouraging,

I remain yours very truly,  
(Signed) \_\_\_\_\_

### § 12

*Human Wisdom.*—The tendency to confuse intelligence with mere knowledge is given constant support by pedagogues, who are the chief beneficiaries of it. Now and then even a man of genuine intelligence allows himself to be seduced into assuming that the two things are one—as Thomas A. Edison lately demonstrated with his celebrated list of examination questions. But let us look into the matter. Who, in all this imperial Republic, are the best “educated” men, the men who know most, the men whose minds are most solidly packed with colossal stores of “useful” knowledge? Answer: (a) the railway mail clerks, and (b) the newspaper copy-readers.

### § 13

*Touring the Republic.*—The civilized traveler in the United States is constantly confronted by the problem of the Gideon Society Bible. There it stands on the bureau or writing-desk as he enters his room—mutely testifying to the intolerable fact that a gang of shoe-drummers is concerned about his soul. What to do with it? I know

one man who instantly heaves it into the waste-basket, and another who throws it out of the window. “Throws” is not quite correct; “used to throw” would be better. Once in Buffalo, letting the Bible fly from the tenth story of his hotel, he cracked the head of a traffic cop on the corner, and there was a great sensation. The *Polizei*, in fact, surrounded and rushed the hotel, and then made a diligent search for a room with no Bible in it. Fortunately, my friend had observed the flooring of the gendarme from his window, and so he had time to sneak into the next room and steal another one. The occupant of this room was a clergyman, which added a piquant touch to the situation. He was able to prove that he was miles from the hotel at the time the Bible was thrown out, but this proof probably failed to convince more than one member of his congregation. In the end the cops jailed one of the hotel maids, and forced a confession out of her by the third degree. She was fined \$20. My friend sent her the money anonymously, and \$50 extra as a balm to her feelings. I later heard that she married the cop.

When I first began encountering Gideon Bibles in hotels I used to shove them under the bureau, confident that they would never be disturbed until the Judgment Day. But of late I simply stuff them with atheistic leaflets, many varieties of which are sold at low rates by the free-thinking societies. It is a case of dog eat dog: the tin-horn Ingersolls versus the Gideons. On what ground the hotel-keepers of the country permit the Bibles to be put into bedrooms I do not know. Perhaps it is easier to take them than to resist the importunities of the Gideons, who no doubt have all the unpleasant persistence of evangelical clergymen. It is an astonishing fact, but nevertheless a fact, that it seems a sheer impossibility for a member of any of the proselytizing Protestant sects to be a gentleman; I have never encountered one in all my travels. To be interested actively in the soul of one’s brother is simply to be a

cad; it is almost precisely like being actively interested in his wife's confinements. I mean, of course, if one is a layman. A clergyman is to be excused; he is professionally interested, just as an obstetrician is interested in parturition. But even a clergyman, unless he is a man of great delicacy, often takes on a bounderish tinge. His profession forces him to invade the privacy of others, which is always extremely disagreeable.

So far as I know I have never met an actual Gideon. All the drummers I encounter in Pullman smoke-rooms seem to be of the classical variety, and quite devoid of evangelical passion. The principal subject of their incessant (and often very annoying) talk is Prohibition and how to beat it. Having exchanged the addresses of all the reliable bootleggers they know, and swapped a

few dozen recipés for home-brew, gin, raisin-wine, vermouth and apple-jack, they resume their ancient discussion, interrupted by the dry millennium, of the arts and weaknesses of the fair sex. Drummers, as a class, seem to be great lady-killers, or else thumping liars. I am myself a pretty fellow and always have plenty of money in my pockets, yet it is a very rare experience for me to have a beautiful woman call me up at my hotel and hint broadly that her husband is leaving for Dallas, Tex., at 8.54 P. M. But to all drummers, it appears, such thinly-disguised appeals to their baser nature are commonplace. I can't imagine fellows of that sort belonging to the Gideons, and paying in their hard money to buy Bibles. Who, then, are the Gideons? Perhaps they are drummers of the sort who ride in the day-coach.



## Chivalry Lives On

*By William Seagle*

CHIVALRY is not dead yet. Immediately the woman entered the subway car he arose and gave her his seat. He acknowledged her thanks with a salute of his hat. In a moment the train had drawn into the next station. He stepped off.



IT takes at least three people to make a conversation: Two to talk, and a third to talk about.



IT is easy to believe in love at first sight, provided you never look again.



# A Real Womanly Woman

By *W. C. Wilber*

## I

WHEN the funeral was decently over and the portly figure of Omar Codman, in a black broad-cloth suit, a respectable cloth-covered coffin and a highly varnished rough box had been reverently consigned to the native earth by six fellow lodge members, it devolved upon Doc Harris, intimate friend of the deceased, to break the bad news to the widow. The bad news, in brief, was that the wholesale fish business which had been Omar Codman's lifework and monument was a bloomer.

"It cut the life out of him, Myra," explained Doc, sadly. "It broke his heart to see that elegant fish business going down and down and no stopping of it. Just before he up and died he says: 'Doc, I'm through. The fish trust got me. I'm flatter'n any flounder ever was!' Of course, Myra, you got the insurance and house, but retrench, Myra! Retrench!"

The Widow Codman received the news with the calmness which was her habit. She was a small, plump woman, blondly commonplace, with a mind which prided itself upon being exact. She took issue with Doc that the fish merchant had died of a broken heart.

"The doctor said—" she observed—"The doctor said it was indigestion. I told Omar time and time again that oyster patties fixed rich like Hulda makes 'em would bring his death." She sighed heavily. "Omar was so fond of Hulda's oyster patties!"

There was silence in the darkened front room of the Codman dwelling. It was a small house, square as a box, and with about as much claim to archi-

tectural distinction. It stood on one of the new streets of the East End—a street with new cement walks, new pavement with flower beds down the middle of the road, and rows of spindly bushes which the inhabitants hoped would some day appear as stately elms.

The furniture was new as the house. When the Codmans moved from the comfortable seclusion of Jefferson Street to East End, and its palatial bungalows, Myra Codman had pried loose from the tottering Omar enough to revamp and refurbish the premises. The lares and penates which had done yeoman service in the Jefferson Street flat had been scrapped. Included in the junk which Myra Codman firmly put behind her was the best parlor sofa, done in red plush, upon which the fish merchant had been wont to take his evening nap. He moaned that he missed the red plush and that he could take small comfort out of the stuffed creation which took its place. An "atrocious," he called it.

The Widow Codman sat stiffly on the edge of the stuffed "atrocious" and dabbed at her eyes with a black-bordered handkerchief. The thought came to her, as the tears welled, that she might have allowed Omar to keep the red plush sofa. It was instantly dismissed. It had been her firm conviction, after living with Omar Codman, that the way to a man's heart was through his stomach, and hadn't she hired Hulda Svensson to cater to Omar's gustatory passions? Not only had she hired the peerless Hulda, but she had battled to keep her when members of the Ladies' Auxiliary sought to woo her away with soft words and specious promises.

"Omar was fond of the good things of life," she sighed. "I set the table regardless of cost."

"That's just the point," urged Doc Harris. "You got to cut down, Myra. Maybe you better give up the house and go to rooming somewhere! Now that the fish business is practically gone, there ain't much left!"

"The Lord will provide," said the widow, sententiously. "Who was it, Doc, that got lost in the wilderness? That the ravens fed?"

"You mean Job, Myra. He had about all the boils and troubles there was going at that time!"

"Maybe, I can't think just now. Anyway, the widow and the orphan will be provided for. Though of course" —simpering—"there isn't any orphan. Omar wasn't fond of children and neither was I. He had his club and the lodge, and I had the Ladies' Auxiliary and the Lady Knights and the Lit'rary Circle. And of course we had Hulda. I don't know what I shall ever do without Hulda!"

Hulda, who had been hovering in the dimly lighted dining-room, taking in the conference, immediately bounced in with a fine display of well-developed limbs and a burst of Scandinavian sentiment.

"Yust don't you worry, ma'am!" said Hulda. "I had a man die on me once, too! Yust don't you worry. I stick by you!"

The widow had no intention of worrying. She had not worried since the fish merchant captured her heart and hand; she saw no reason for beginning now. She placidly helped Doc Harris to find his hat in the mazes of the front hall bric-a-brac, and then sobbed gently upon the broad bosom of Hulda while Doc, having fulfilled his sad mission, prepared to dash away to the Midnight Sons' club.

"Women! Women!" murmured Doc, as he reached the street, and its radiating heat waves, and paused to mop his brow. "No more business sense than a chicken—less than some chickens. Well, I done the best I could for poor old Omar. I advised her!"

He walked down the street snorting and sniffing to himself. Think of a grown woman talking rot about being fed up by ravens! By gosh, she better look out, or the ravens would pluck her cleaner'n a whistle! He knew something about ravens, said Doc to himself.

As Doc told a commiserating crowd at the club, later, he might as well have saved his wind. The Widow Codman didn't cut down. She didn't adopt the first principles of economic administration.

As the days went on and Omar Codman and the fish business became a lamented though misty memory, she began to take beauty treatments, and invested in an array of widow's weeds which took the members of the Ladies' Auxiliary by storm. The ladies openly charged that she was hunting a "man," and though the gossip, with elaborations, was borne to her by faithful and curious friends, she didn't deny it. She went her way with bovine placidity, and presently sold the bungalow in East End and moved to the Worthington Arms, billed by the realtors as "an apartment hotel of the better class." There was a janitor, a blonde girl at the switchboard, and a negro elevator boy.

This was the last straw, said Doc Harris, who had been the boon companion of the late fish merchant on many a beer party. He took occasion to remonstrate bitterly.

"I thought a lot of Omar," he said. "And knowing him as I did, and what a sound business head he had on him till the fish trust busted him, I know he wouldn't approve of all this. Omar lived within his means. When he had only beer money, he didn't try to open wine on it. Honest, Myra, blowing in your money like this is enough to make poor old Omar roll over in his grave! He had to sell a lot of fish to build the bungalow and buy the new furniture and everything!"

"The Lord will provide for the widow and the orphan," said the widow, in a tone of mild reproof. "The ravens fed 'em when they were lost in the wilderness!"

"Ravens!" Doc snorted disgust. "Remember, Myra, this ain't those ancient medieval times! Have some sense! The ravens nowadays sail round looking for suckers, and at that, I think they're going to find one. Honest, Myra, if you'd only put the money into good, high-class securities and gone into a nice, respectable rooming house, and listened to the advice of me and Omar's friends! But you wouldn't listen!"

After Doc had taken himself away in high dudgeon, the Widow Codman dreamily donned a ravishing creation in lavender, billed to her the day before at eighty dollars by Madame Hennessey, and prepared to go for her afternoon beauty treatment.

She was enjoying her widowhood. With the estimable Codman out of the way, she was enjoying a routine of pleasure which, a year or two before, she had regarded as chimerical. Her round, plump face, without lines or wrinkles, had taken on new color beneath the skilled fingers of Madame Schwartz, the masseuse. Madame Hennessey had imparted to her somewhat dumpy figure a touch of elegance. Eyeing herself in the glass, she reflected that she looked "stylish."

As she left Apartment 14, with the faithful Hulda esquiring her to the door, her round blue eyes observed that a newcomer was moving in across the hall. Men in jumpers, breathing muffled profanity as they barked their shins and knuckles, hustled about bringing up from the van various pieces of furniture which seemed to have the common attribute of tan leather upholstery. It was distinctly masculine furniture, the widow observed.

Overseeing proceedings was a stout man, himself magnificently upholstered, smoking a fat cigar and talking to the obsequious janitor with an air of vast authority. The widow surmised correctly that this was her new neighbor.

She stopped at the cluttered stairway, with a pretty air of confusion. Then she glanced appealingly toward the janitor and the magnificent stranger. The stranger, observing her, immedi-

ately doffed his derby, showing a shiny bald spot rimmed with black hair, and stepped forward with an air of greatest gallantry. The janitor hastened to do the honors.

"Mrs. Codman, this is the new tenant, Mr. Jenkins. Mr. Jenkins—Mrs. Codman!"

"Pleased tuh meetcha!" said Mr. Jenkins.

The Widow Codman murmured a pleasantry and extended her prettily gloved hand exactly as she had seen Mrs. Sylvester Ringborn, who patronized Madame Schwartz, do it. Mr. Jenkins grasped the hand, pumped at it daintily for a moment, and then insisted upon piloting her down the stairs. She grasped his thick arm with a little clinging gesture as the hired hands steamed by with the Jenkins goods and chattels. He bowed her out of the lobby with an expansive smile which revealed many gold teeth.

"She's a widow," explained the janitor.

"A kinda pretty little trick, at that. But old—kinda old," said Mr. Jenkins, profoundly. He dismissed her from his mind as he tackled the problem of bringing a four-foot cellarette through a three-foot door.

The widow was pleasantly excited. Here was a gentleman fitting for the Worthington Arms—a single gentleman, presumably, of the better sort.

"The Lord helps those who help themselves," said the widow, to herself. A single gentleman, moving, would doubtless have a fine appetite when evening fell. She recalled the trencher-feasts of the late Omar when they moved into the East End bungalow. She hastened to the nearest telephone and called the peerless Hulda, telling her that choice viands would shortly arrive at Apartment 14. She instructed her to do her noble best.

"A nice thick soup, Hulda," were her parting words. "And the oyster patties—rich ones, like Mr. Codman used to like, and the steak done just like Mr. Codman used to like it—kind of raw in the middle!"

Then, smiling a little, and reminding herself that though a male is wooed and won through his duodenum, still the externals count for something, she hastened to the beauty parlor and besought Madame Schwartz to do a swell job. The madame obliged, and then the Widow Codman, still pleasantly thrilled, skipped back to Apartment 14 to keep watch and ward. Savory smells came from the kitchen, where Hulda labored among pots and pans.

## II

LATER, when the moving van had gone its way, and the wrecking crew, smoking fat cigars, had clattered down the stairs for the last time, the widow emerged from Apartment 14 and, crossing the hall, gently knocked at the door of Apartment 15.

Mr. Jenkins, looking warm and considerably more flustered than he had before engaging in the engineering feat which landed the bulky cellarette into the apartment, came to the door.

"Oh! Mr. Jenkins!" The Widow Codman gushed a little. "Oh! Mr. Jenkins—I know it's horribly unconventional—me coming to your door like this; but I always say neighbors should be neighborly, and I know what it is to move and not have a bite in the place or a place to lay your head. Won't you come in and have a bite with me? It isn't much—I've just kind-of thrown a little dinner together—"

Mr. Jenkins looked a little astonished and more than a little bit flattered. He bowed and smirked, settling his shoulders into his coat. He accepted.

"I'll just get slicked up a little," said he. "Maybe a little drink or so wouldn't go bad, eh?"

He winked ponderously toward the bulky cellarette. The Widow Codman giggled.

"Oh! Mr. Jenkins!" she said. Then she scuttled away to Apartment 14.

Mr. Jenkins, slicked up for dinner, appeared even more magnificently upholstered than he had during moving operations of the afternoon. The pro-

tuberance beneath his coat, he explained, was a bottle. It didn't do, said Mr. Jenkins, to be seen carrying a bottle these days. He requested ice and glasses. Presently Mr. Jenkins and his hostess looked at each other over an amber concoction.

"Here's how, ma'am," said Mr. Jenkins, tossing his off. The widow sipped hers, and grew pleasantly enthused. The lamented fish dealer had been given to beer. The widow didn't like beer—never had, in fact.

"I'm sure you'll think I'm awful forward, inviting you over like this when we hardly know each other," she said. "But I know what it is when you're alone—and lonely!"

She sighed pensively, while Mr. Jenkins protested that he read nothing untoward in her action. He mixed two more drinks, and when the widow daintily refused hers, he drank them both, remarking that good stuff was too precious to waste, these days.

"Dinner bane served, ma'am!" The peerless Hulda, flushed from her labors, threw back the plush portiere that separated the dining-room from the little living-room. Mr. Jenkins, heavily hilarious, mixed two more drinks.

"What is your business, Mr. Jenkins?" The widow was politely curious.

"I'm a bookmaker," said Mr. Jenkins, sampling the thick soup with relish.

Aha! An artist! Probably a writer! Agog at the thought of entertaining a possible literary lion, the Widow Codman cudgeled her brain for suitable conversation. What was it the Literary Circle had been discussing? Ah! Yes!

"What do you think of Sinclair Lewis's 'Main Street'?" she asked.

"Never heard of 'um," replied Mr. Jenkins, between spoonfuls of soup. "Must be a fine oilcan if I never heard of 'um. Wouldn't lay a nickel on 'um. If you're bound to play 'um, they's a filly in the fourth race at Latonia tomorrow—"

Mr. Jenkins stopped, as though he had been about to betray an international secret. He devoted himself to his soup.

"Elegant soup!" said he, with the air of a gourmet. "My late lamented—the late Mrs. Jenkins—she made an elegant soup, though at that I don't think it was as elegant as this soup is. It's the seasonin' does it!"

"That's it—the seasoning," said the Widow Codman, brightly. "I always say the seasoning makes the food. I see to the seasoning personally. Just as you say, it's the seasoning."

He hesitated to discuss his work, she thought. Perhaps he was shy. Literary men were sometimes like that, she had heard. There was silence, broken only by the gustatory noises of Mr. Jenkins, doing away with the soup. She tried again.

"Do you write books, Mr. Jenkins?" she asked.

"Well, that depends." Mr. Jenkins finished the soup with a final gurgle and leaned back in his chair judicially. "Some places, like Ti'Juana and N'Orleans, I write 'em. Other places, where these damn reformers are runnin' wild—beg pardon, ma'am—I take oral bets. They all know Sam Jenkins. I never welched a bet on any track yet."

"Track! Bets!" Honest amazement was written on Widow Codman's plump features.

"Sure! I told yuh! I take bets on the horses!"

"Oh, I see!" The widow laughed nervously. After a moment Mr. Jenkins laughed, too.

"I get yuh," he said. "You wasn't wise. Well, I don't like wise-cracking dames anyway. My late lamented—the late Mrs. Jenkins—she wasn't wise. She was busy trying to make a home for me. 'I'll do the wise-crackin'," I says, and she agreed with me. She certainly broiled an elegant steak."

The peerless Hulda brought on the steak, with fresh-baked potatoes. Mr. Jenkins eyed it as a shark eyes a bit of pork. It was nobly brown and crisp on the surface and little rivulets of red juice ran from it and formed a puddle on the platter.

"Shall I serve it, ma'am?" asked Mr. Jenkins, eyes a-gleam.

"Pray do," answered the widow. "It seems so good to have a man to serve again. Mr. Codman always served. He said it wasn't a woman's place. I believe in a womanly woman. A woman isn't made to fight the hard battles of life, Mr. Jenkins."

"Nope," replied the guest. He was busy with his food. "'S an elegant steak!"

So he was a bookmaker—a gambler! The Widow Codman, who had gained her information on gamblers from novels, recalled that these heroes were invariably tall, handsome and romantic. Mr. Jenkins was not especially tall nor handsome, though richly upholstered. And even to the Widow Codman's inexperienced eyes, Mr. Jenkins, consuming steak and baked potato, with an occasional side excursion into an oyster patty, was not romantic.

"It must be wonderful—bookmaking. So—so romantic!"

"Yeah." Mr. Jenkins scooped out an oyster and a delicately brown flake of pastry and engaged it with greatest relish. "'S an elegant oyster patty you serve, ma'am."

"Yes," observed the widow. "I make them from my own receipt. They were favorites of Mr. Codman. In fact he . . ."

She was about to say "he died of them," but thought better of it at the last moment.

She sighed and then smiled brightly again.

"It must be wonderful to travel over the country, visiting racetracks and mingling with the hoi polloi and rich people and such. I always yearned to travel!"

"Yeah." Mr. Jenkins sipped noisily and appreciatively at his coffee. "'S all right for a while, but you get tired of it. I get tired of the grub. I get tired of hanging on the old feedbag at a hotel every day, no matter how swell and all it may be. I like good home cooking. My late lamented—the late Mrs. Jenkins—she was an elegant cook."

"And probably you make a lot of

money," murmured the widow. He was certainly elegantly upholstered.

"Yeah. I do well." The peerless Hulda removed the remains and brought in a quarter section of deep peach pie that brought a glow to Mr. Jenkins's black eyes. "Of course, sometimes I get nicked. I never forget the day at Hamilton when I lost eight thousand smackers on one race—I like to a' died from the heat and everything that day. But I got the percentage with me. I figure 'em."

Mr. Jenkins, wielding his fork with the persistence and stern relentlessness of a steam shovel, pausing only for occasional noisy sips at his coffee, waded through the peach pie. He said it was elegant pie—even the late Mrs. Jenkins, he said, had never been able to achieve a pie like that. At last, with a sigh, he leaned back in his chair.

"I haven't enjoyed a meal of vittles so much since the late Mrs. Jenkins died," he declared. The tribute that one pays to an artist was in 'his eye. "Mrs. Codman, ma'am, you're some cook!"

"It's a pleasure to cook for a man that appreciates," the widow simpered. Her eyes were downcast and a faint blush suffused her round face. "Mr. Codman was like that. I always set the table regardless of cost. And seeing you moving in today and working so hard, I just thought I'd be real unconventional for once and invite you in."

"It's certainly appreciated," declared Mr. Jenkins, heartily. He lit up a thick cigar.

His beady eyes became almost sentimental. She was some cook! And a fine figure of a woman she was, too. Sensible, and no monkey-business about her. And some cook! "Let's have another lil' drink? What say?"

"Oh! You men!" The widow giggled a girlish giggle and hastened to get tall glasses and cracked ice. Mr. Jenkins winked jovially at her as he poured the liquor. Their hands touched, accidentally, as they fumbled with the glasses . . .

"How'd you like to go over to the track tomorrow, and have me show you around a little?" After that dinner and three highballs, Mr. Jenkins began to glow. He had the feeling that he had met "the one woman." She was some cook! And a darned nifty dresser, too. And some cook. . . .!

"Oh! I'd love to." The widow's pleasantly rounded features were animated. "I never went to the races before. I'd love to go, Mr. Jenkins. But I wouldn't want to intrude. No doubt you have other friends . . . young girls—."

"No chickens for me," replied Mr. Jenkins, promptly and emphatically. "All those dames want of you is to pull your leg and get tips and dinners and things. I'm off of 'em. I remember one time down at Aqueduct. . . ."

"I believe in a woman being old-fashioned, and, well—a real womanly woman," said the widow, hastily. "I'd love to go!"

"It's a date then," said Mr. Jenkins.

"And we can come up here afterwards and have a real home dinner," supplemented the widow. "I'll put the things on before we leave."

"That's an elegant idear!" Mr. Jenkins's voice was enthusiastic. "I generally have a pretty fair appetite after a day at the track."

"We'll have a roast, with pan-brownied potatoes, and a nice salad with Russian dressing, and new peas . . . The Widow Codman's voice was dulcet.

"And maybe another of them elegant oyster patties?" Mr. Jenkins's eyes were almost adoring. What a woman!

"Yes, and a deep apple pie and cream cheese."

Silence fell. Mr. Jenkins reached for the bottle and poured himself another drink. This was the life. A home, and a real womanly woman around, and home cooking . . . A long vista of pleasant evenings and home-cooked dinners began to stretch out in his mind's eye. He blew smoke rings with an air of thoughtful consideration.

"Well, I gotta go in and get things straightened round." Mr. Jenkins rose

with a sigh. The widow accompanied him to the door.

"I'll run in tomorrow morning and help. There's nothing like a woman's touch to make a home. Any real womanly woman would be glad to do it."

"You're certainly right, Mrs. Codman, ma'am."

Mr. Jenkins stepped ponderously across the hall to Apartment 15. He turned and shook a fat finger roguishly.

"Don't you forget our date, tomorrow, now!"

"I won't," promised the widow softly. Small chance there was. She closed the door and stepped back to the living room.

What a life it would be! Race tracks, bands, cheering crowds, excitement! Why had she married a fish merchant in the first place? She began to feel petulantly that she had been cheated of a share of life. Why, even royalty went to the races! And she would be a part of it—Mrs. Samuel Jenkins, exquisitely gowned, bejeweled, regal . . .

there would be a round of hotels, the best ones. Anyone could see that Mr. Jenkins patronized only the best.

"He certainly bane one swell man." The peerless Hulda was busy removing the last of the dishes. "I yust love to cook for a man like that—what enjoys his vittles!"

"Mrs. Samuel Jenkins." The Widow Codman, before her boudoir mirror, softly enunciated the words. The wife of a successful gambler, an entrepreneur of chance! Her skin was soft and smooth. Her eyes were bright. No lines of worry seamed her face. Why, she was a young woman still!

"Mrs. Samuel Jenkins!" she said again, a trifle louder. What a life it would be! "The Lord will provide. The ravens fed 'em in the wilderness!"

She was fluttering with excitement. But as she hopped into bed her mind was busy with the next day's dinner and the instructions she would give to Hulda. Her theory of life was being proved. It took a real womanly woman to get there!



## Ophelia

*By Elinor Wylie*

MY locks are shorn for sorrow  
Of love which may not be;  
Tomorrow and tomorrow  
Are plotting cruelty.

The winter wind tangles  
These ringlets half-grown,  
The sun sprays with spangles  
And rays like his own.

Oh, quieter and colder  
Is the stream; he will wait  
When my curls touch my shoulder  
He will comb them straight.

# Five Curses

*By M. C. McGuckin*

I

**L**ET all imagination that would spoil exquisite things be damned!

II

Damn weaknesses that creep, like oily snakes, about our feet and make us fall, when we would watch high stars!

III

May all desires that cannot bear fulfilling perish before they find expression!

IV

And all forbidden things that wrap themselves in memory, marked "precious," "with care," be damned, damned utterly!

V

Damn wondering and waiting! Damn all the suffering that comes to fools who feel!



## Mood

*By Beatrice Ravenel*

**T**HE touch of your wishes offends me. But today when you bent your head,  
Leaving me, setting me free from your endless sadness,  
A mood brushed by in the air  
And wound me about like a scarf, a trail of fragrance  
Blown from a woman in love.  
And the world hung poised like the waiting  
Just before storm.  
Then broke into silver vibrations—  
The infinite, shouting relief of the rain.  
And I loved . . . something.  
You?

# The Red Gods and Mr. Norton

*By Marion Randall Parsons*

## I

SINCE cafeteria prices had risen Mr. Norton went home for the midday meal. At the corner of Market and Kearney streets that March noon he waited as usual for his north-bound car—Mrs. Norton, whose sister had married an Italian, preferred the social background of Telegraph Hill. The corner flower-stands were fragrant with narcissus and violets, glowing with daffodils. Spring sunshine made even the city streets radiant. Mr. Norton was vaguely aware that people looked more smiling, walked with a brisker step, than in the stormy weeks just past.

He himself—a shabby-coated little man with a magazine tucked close under his arm—basked in a warmer glow than spring sunshine. Adventure, that morning, had brushed him with a golden wing. As he stood fingering the straggly ends of his blond moustache, his mild pale blue eyes staring over the jostling crowd at the bank of flowers, he was living over the incident in his mind. . .

It had been still early in the morning when business was slack. He had just finished draping a display of silks on his counter and had stepped out into the aisle to admire the effect—henna and orange burning at the duskier end, apricot and old ivory gleaming near the door—when he heard the floor-walker's voice behind him:

"This is Mr. Norton."

He turned. A black-eyed young woman gave him a friendly smile.

"I'm doing a rather particular errand for an old customer of yours—Mrs. Johnstone," she said. "She wouldn't trust my judgment, but she said Mr. Norton would know. This is the dress material. She wants something for an over-blouse. Blue, I suggested—"

"Green!" Mr. Norton had said firmly. He took down a bolt of silk and draped an end of it over his arm.

"Apparently she did well to trust to you!" Good-humored approval glanced from the girl's eyes. "That's a ripping combination. Two yards, please. I'll take it with me."

As he measured off the silk and made out the charge slip, the girl sat down beside the counter and opened a book. Mr. Norton furtively eyed her, approving the girl as much as he deplored her carelessly chosen clothes. She shouldn't wear gray, not with that skin. Brown, that was what. Funny she didn't pay any attention to his silks! Funny she couldn't spare time from her reading for a civil word or two! He glanced down, half resentfully, at the open page.

"Oh, I say!" said Mr. Norton. "Where do you find books like that?"

Surprised, the girl looked up at him. "Public library. Don't you ever browse around the Travel shelves?" She turned the book so that he could see the illustration.

Mr. Norton fingered the leaves. "My wife gets the books always. I haven't the time. I say! Isn't that wonderful? A photograph, too! You can't believe, somehow, that there are mountains like that. I used to like them in the movies, till once I saw a picture

showing how films are made. Since then it seems like even the mountains are painted—thought up—that they can't be real."

"They are, though." The girl's eyes held friendly sympathy. "To me they are the real things. This is made-up—unreal." She waved her hand disparagingly over his wares.

"Mean to say you've ever seen places like this—such white mountains and big rivers and trees?"

"Lived in them for months at a time."

"My word!" said Mr. Norton hungrily. Mechanically he turned to the basket and took down her package. His fingers fluttered over the leaves of the book before he surrendered it.

The girl reached into her satchel and drew out a magazine.

"Here," she said, "I'm going to leave this with you. It's full of mountain pictures—a magazine of pictures. The library is open evenings, you know. You can read it there every month if you like."

Mr. Norton took the book. If he had been a starving sparrow before which she had scattered crumbs, to thank her in words would not have been farther from his thoughts. His mild eyes, looking up at her at last, had held the mute bewilderment of those of an animal in pain.

"I meant to be a sailor when I was a boy," he had said. "I always meant to see all the wonderful places in the world. But I married before I was nineteen. . . ."

His car at last. He turned from the glow of the flowers and the memory they evoked to the business of getting aboard.

He found a seat and plunged into the magazine. He had not dared more than to peep within its pages all morning. There were not only mountain pictures in it; there were people of foreign lands, people dressed in outlandish costumes, driving strange beasts and vehicles. The mountains, that had first startled him out of his routine, he passed over quickly now. They seemed

too inhumanly aloof in their white stateliness—cold giants of an unfamiliar world. But the costume pictures fascinated him.

He studied them attentively as a woman might, his unfertile imagination embellishing each, however incongruously, with the sheen of his own best-loved silks. His gaze lingered long upon a burnoose. The lines of its drapery were like the effects he tried for in his window displays. A Chinese costume appealed to the critical rather than the creative side of his mind. He knew those Chinese silks—he had had Chinese ladies among his customers for years. The unshadowed surfaces of their stiff coats and pantaloons had always displeased him. With renewed satisfaction he turned back to the flowing Oriental robes.

There were other landscapes, too, warmer-looking and less lonesome than the white splendor of the snows. They bore names that sang to his ear as colors made harmony to his eyes—Bessarabia! Samarkand! He murmured them to himself half aloud, repeated them like a poem. His mind went back with passionate gratitude to the friendly girl who had given him the magazine. Perhaps she had lived in these countries too. He glanced up, in wistful search for a sympathetic passenger to whom he could talk out his delight. But the greasy, garlic-tainted citizens who edged him into his corner promised only blank unresponsiveness, and he lost himself again in the magic of his book.

Had not the car conductor, recognizing him from many noons, touched his shoulder at his corner he would have passed it by. He stumbled as he rose and walked blindly, causing the conductor to wonder enviously where the little jay had got his jag.

Drunk with a dream was Mr. Norton. The steep hill that rose before him was not San Francisco's squalid Little Italy—it rose above Hong Kong. The blue water that sparkled beyond it was the China Sea.

But as he opened his apartment door,

sobering reality faced him. His wife and their only daughter, absorbed in making Easter clothes, sat beside a table still covered with the dirty breakfast dishes from which he had risen at seven-thirty that morning. Mrs. Norton, huddled into the soiled kimono whose gaudy-flowered pattern almost sickened him, looked up with a frown.

"You home, Henry! Just clear the place there and Babe'll have the coffee hot in a shake. There's meat loaf in the cooler an' some nice buttered toast left over from breakfast. I guess you c'n make out for once without my help."

Mr. Norton meekly accepted the time-worn phrase and set out his lunch for himself. He had long ceased to wonder whether Mrs. Norton really believed that she gave him wifely attentions: he had long since divined why Babe was told to set on the coffee-pot—Mrs. Norton, preferring tea at noon, was afraid he might add fresh coffee to the morning dregs.

Before Babe, an eighteen-year-old replica of Mrs. Norton, her father had always quailed. Parenthood and a sense of guilt were one to Mr. Norton. From teething to heart problems he had been given to understand that somehow it had all been his fault. As to Babe herself, it is doubtful whether she even regarded him as a parent. She never noticed him at all. To both women he was little more than a periodic reappearance, like the milk bottle, to be set down at the table corner and to be drained just as dry.

"Well, Henry," said Mrs. Norton as he pushed back his chair, "Saturday noon again. Don't forget to fork over the cash. Me'n Babe is goin' shoppin' this afternoon."

For the first time in his patient life Mr. Norton was shaken by a silent convulsion of rage and revolt.

He glanced around the room, part dining-room, part kitchen, that in his waking hours constituted what he could call his home. The parlor, where Babe and her mother entertained visitors, was a junk-crammed hideousness into which

he never set foot, but it was the only room to which they gave any care. Hardly a Saturday went by that they did not return from their weekly orgy of spending with some jimcrack to add to its charm. They adorned the house as they adorned their persons—for the gaze of the outsider alone. To Mr. Norton they offered only kimonos and curl-papers, a dirty, crumb-strewn cloth, a room littered with fag-ends of "bargain" remnants, old hat frames, greasy novels—

"I haven't got the money," he lied sullenly, taking up his hat.

"But Henry! You always get it Saturday noon!" cried Mrs. Norton. Babe fixed him with furious eyes.

"I haven't got it," he reiterated. "New manager. Never again till Saturday night."

"We'll have to shop this evenin'," his wife grumbled.

"Won't be home this evening. Working," said Mr. Norton.

He was dumfounded to hear the glib words issue from his lips. Some imp seemed to have taken possession of him, to be using him as a mouthpiece for startling and original utterances. Mild deception had long been his protective coloring—his individuality's defense against complete obliteration, but this fertility in lying was totally unforeseen.

"You're not open Saturday evenin'," said Mrs. Norton, not suspiciously—who could suspect Mr. Norton—but in bewilderment.

"New management," said Mr. Norton. "Not open to public. Giving all us clerks a demonstration how to sell goods."

"Well, if they don't know you can sell goods after twenty years you'd better do like I always said—get out o' that high-toned place and into some store where Babe'n I c'n get the good of the trade."

It had been the one real friction point in all the years, the one independent trait he had stubbornly asserted—his pride in his work. But he did not react as usual under her contempt.

"Maybe changes are coming, quicker than you know," he said, and slipping his magazine into his overcoat pocket he closed the door behind him.

## II

EVERY noon Mr. Norton made a detour of a block to cross through the green oasis of the shabby little park. No flowers grew there, but against the dark, velvety cypresses the tender green of wind-swept willows played upon his senses in a rich harmony of color tone.

Quite suddenly he made up his mind not to go back to the store for the afternoon. The long hours stretched ahead of him, free until midnight. His pockets burned with his week's wage. The dazzling thought struck him that if he chose he could remain out all night, have a Sunday of solitude roaming whithersoever he would. He might never go back at all. He might go down to the wharves, look for a job on a great liner like the one now steaming across his vision, and sail away on her through the Golden Gate. How the bay sparkled! It would be great at the beach that afternoon. . . .

Impulsively he headed for the public telephone station, but at its threshold, remembering how frequently Mrs. Norton entered it, he stopped short with a shake of the head. He boarded a west-bound Union Street car, dismounting a block short of the transfer point to enter a corner drugstore. With a bond of a five-cent purchase of peppermints between them, he asked the clerk if he might use the telephone. He waited, looking sidelong from the instrument at the drug clerk, while they called the floor-walker to the telephone.

"This is Norton, Mr. Ferris . . . Norton, yes. Say, I found my wife awful sick, just awful . . . Ptomaine poison, the doctor says . . . No, not dangerous, I guess, but I can't leave her for more'n a minute or two . . . No, daughter's out. Have to wait till she gets back . . . I know, Saturday afternoon . . . Awful good of you, Mr. Ferris. Just as soon as I can."

He hung up the receiver. The drug clerk, tying up a parcel, gazed after him, jaw agape in admiration.

With the business of the day over, Mr. Norton gave himself up to his dreams. Steeped once more in his magazine, he made his second transfer automatically and by mistake took the municipal car whose terminal is at the Fourth Avenue entrance to Golden Gate Park.

After a moment of bewildered hesitation the novel idea of walking out to the ocean occurred to him. His knowledge of the park was bounded by the museum, the bandstand, and the children's playground, but he knew that by continuing westward he would arrive sooner or later at the ocean.

As he turned into a solitary bypath his strolling step became a strut. He felt like an adventurer, an explorer, a pioneer. He was out of sight of the motor-invested boulevard and only dimly conscious of the purr of machinery and the bark of motor horns. The scent of flowering acacia almost overcame the smell of gasoline. Dark aisles of cypresses; warm glow of yellow broom; incredibly tall eucalyptus trees, showing to his color-sharpened eye fascinating tones of greens and brown beneath the shredded dry bark clinging to their boles; birds that fitted in and out of the bushes; sunshine; warm, earthy smell of spring—all these to Mr. Norton made the neatly graveled path a wilderness trail. Peace encompassed him, and rare solitude.

At the first of the lakes he sat down on a bench to rest his aching feet. He chose a secluded spot and for long sat there undisturbed, watching the ducks and mud-hens, brooding over the life of adventure upon which he had felt sure he was about to embark. But under his weariness and the misty languor of the lake, ruffled only by the drowsy swimming of the waterfowl, the brightness of the vagabond image began to fade. He yawned and stretched, and feeling unaccountably lonely, took out his magazine. Life—full, rich, varied—rose before him again like a mirage.

A breeze from the ocean, frisking across the lake, fluttered the page out of his inattentive fingers. Startled out of his reverie, he raised his eyes. On the bench in front of him a blue-coated arm now made a pleasant break across a red jersey coat—a too lurid scarlet coat that jangled the soft green and silver harmony of his like. He had not been aware of their approach, these young people who had broken in upon his retreat. In the recurrent loneliness of his unaccustomed solitude he would have been disposed to welcome the intrusion had not his second glance at them, including the girl's white skirt, recalled the color offense of every national holiday.

Mr. Norton lowered his eyes to his magazine. But he could not recapture a dream of Oriental splendor while that red and white girl remained circled by the blue serge arm. He was considering the question of walking on when the girl disentangled herself and rose to her feet.

"Come along, Dick," she said, smiling down at him. "Mustn't keep the minister waiting. Ain't it most three o'clock?"

Mr. Norton, charmed by her face, forgave the crudity of her clothes. She was a brunette of warm, rich coloring, a mere youngster, certainly not more than eighteen. Looking at her, he failed to note that it was her high thin voice that evoked the sudden image of Babe.

The boy, putting his hand to his waistcoat, searched absently for a moment, then sprang to his feet. He went frantically through every pocket. With a moan he sank down on the bench, covering his face with his hands. Mr. Norton felt a thrill pass over him. In the lad's blond, dreamy face he had seen himself, a youth. Memory in a flash brought back to him a long forgotten day of his only romance. It had been springtime, too, and they had sat on a bench in a park . . .

"What is it, Dick? You ain't had your pocket picked?"

The boy lifted a pallid face. "Every

cent gone. My watch, my purse—" he covered his eyes again.

The girl's cheeks flamed. She took a step toward him. Her voice rose higher. "Well, what're we going to do? What're *you* going to do?"

"We must go to the police, I suppose." After her shriller note his voice sounded flat and dull.

"Fine idea that!" taunted the girl. "Don't you s'pose Ma has the police looking for *us* by this time? Like as not they'd just pack us off home. I say! Have you lost your license too?"

"No, I got that safe here." He undid the top button of his vest and reached deep inside.

Exasperated, the girl threw herself back on the bench. "If that ain't you all over, Dick Mathews! Buttoning up perfectly safe something that nobody'd take and leaving money ready for every crook that comes along!"

"We can get married anyway, Dolly," said the boy more hopefully. "The minister'll wait for his money I know, if I tell him how it is."

"What! Just get married and sneak home without a penny! No honeymoon, nothing! Make myself a laughing stock before all the bunch! What do you take me for?"

"Oh, come, Dolly, you ain't going back on me just because—"

"I say, how much money did you lose?"

The boy and girl looked up in astonishment at the mild, eager little man. They had not known that anyone was near. The girl scowled up at him without a word. The boy's meek, dazed eyes looked up straight into pale eyes much like his own.

"Fifty dollars," he said. "All I'd saved for our honeymoon."

"Eloping!" said Mr. Norton. The girl tossed her head.

"Yes," said the boy.

"Under age, both of you. Fibbed to get the license. No, you don't have to tell *me*," exulted Mr. Norton. "Didn't I do the same myself when I was your age?" He thrust his hand inside his vest and with a lordly flourish drew out

some bills. "Come on to your minister," he said. "I'll grubstake you youngsters to a honeymoon."

## III

It was ten o'clock that evening before Mr. Norton could tear himself away from the adoringly grateful bride and groom. Dolly's arms had clung about him at parting; Dick's handshake had nearly broken his finger bones.

As the street car bore him homeward Mr. Norton sat turning over in his mind the events of the afternoon. He had given the bride away—she had kissed him rapturously before she honored Dick. He had taken them out to the Cliff House in a sight-seeing motorbus and they had insisted on his dining with them. He had been rather staggered at the price of the table d'hôte dinner at Tait's at the Beach, but he had settled without a blink, had tipped the affronted waiter a quarter, and over his coffee cup, with a cigar dying in his unaccustomed fingers, had watched the young people dancing to the most entrancing tunes. How pretty little Dolly was when she laughed . . .

As he sat staring into the mirrored car interior that rode with him outside the window pane, he suddenly awoke to the realization that he had little time to spare for retrospect. Step by step, hour by hour, he had to fabricate a story that would hold. The general plot was clear to him, but large gaps of time and space had still to be filled. He mustn't forget to stop at the police station and report that his pocket had been picked—he had that part of the story pat. Sakes, but there was going to be a rumpus when Ma and Babe heard that he had been robbed!

Mr. Norton moved his shoulders uneasily. The night wind from the rear door of the car penetrated to his bones.

He moved to a seat farther forward but could not escape the chill. The shivery feeling about his neck extended to fingers and toes. In the background of his consciousness uneasy shapes were hovering—the butcher, the grocer, the milkman, those unfinished Easter clothes . . .

Resolutely Mr. Norton shut the door of his mind. His hand, thrust into his overcoat pocket for warmth, touched the forgotten magazine. He took it out, vaguely troubled. He turned over the leaves. Bessarabia. Samarkand. Lands of incense and color. The wide freedom of blue seas . . .

He closed the magazine and laid it down on the seat beside him. He was too old for adventure. Adventure was for the young fellows, like Dick. A fine boy, just such a boy as he himself had been. And Dolly, sweetly pretty, if a bit headstrong and spoiled, was rather like what his own little girl-wife—

Mr. Norton, suddenly grasping his under jaw, stared at his likeness in the window, his mouth drooping limply open, aghast. His straggly moustache faded out of the image framed by the night and his own youthful face gazed back at him—a face full of high hopes and earnest credulity that merged bewilderingly into the blond, dreamy features of Dick. Then Dick too was gone, flashing into dark-eyed Dolly, vivid and passionate like all the crass brood on Telegraph Hill—into a face that was at once his wife and Babe. The kaleidoscopic vision blurred to darkness as Mr. Norton's eyelids closed over the agony of his appalled eyes.

For he had seen at last the monster that lurked out there, behind the faces in the night, ready to hunt the young as it harried the old. Life waited there—life, and the endless, colorless, sapping years.



# White Elephants

[*A Comedy in One Act*]

By Kenyon Nicholson

## CAST OF CHARACTERS:

CONRAD FENTON  
MARCIA, his bride  
LARRY, a bad man  
FLO, his co-worker

**S**CENE: The living room of the Fentons' apartment, *Riverside Drive*. The furniture is shiny and new, the walls and hangings are immaculate. The room has an air of having been "done" by an interior decorator; in fact, overdone. At the rear are two outside windows—the apartment is four flights up. A door, right, leads to the dining-room, the bedroom, and points farther south. A door, left, downstage, leads to the outside hall. There is a gate-legged table in the center of the room, to the right of which stands a luxurious chaise-longue. A small *escritoire* stands against the right wall. Near it is a tea-cart loaded down with all sorts of small articles that look suspiciously like wedding presents.

At the rise of the curtain the stage is dark. A clock is striking eight. There is heard the sound of a key being fitted into a lock at the hall door. After several attempts the door slowly opens. Larry and Flo creep stealthily in. Larry plays an electric flashlight about room, then crosses to windows, pulls down the blinds.

LARRY

(*Sotto voce*.) All right, Flo, give us some light.

FLO

(*Feeling about on wall*.) I can't find the switch.

LARRY

Ought to be just to the right of the door.

FLO

(*Nervously*.) It isn't here, Larry.

LARRY

(*Crossing*.) Aw, quit shaking. I'll get it. (*Switches on light*.) If it had been a snake it would of bit you.

(Larry is small and wiry. He is dressed in an English sport-suit with cap to match. He carries a suitcase and raincoat. Flo, his companion, wears a neat coat-suit.)

FLO

If you don't stop being so cross to me, Larry, I'll leave you to do this job alone.

LARRY

Well, you're such a baby I can't help it. You almost grabbed the whole act a minute ago. If that elevator boy had any brains he could have seen that we were stalling.

FLO

I thought I was doing it the way you told me.

LARRY

It's lucky for you that I got a cool head with brains in it.

FLO

You hate yourself, don't you?

LARRY

We can argue that out some other time. (*Looking about him.*) Say, this is a regular layout!

FLO

Wouldn't it be wonderful, Larry, if we had a beautiful flat like this to move in when we get married?

LARRY

It sure would, kid. Pretty soft for them, I call it. Getting a church wedding, and then having a rich papa to feather them a nest like this. (*Pause.*) There ain't no God.

(*Seeing tea-cart.*) Oh, look there, I'll bet all those are wedding presents. (*Both go to cart.*)

LARRY

They've got so much junk they haven't even got a place to put it.

FLO

(*Handling presents.*) Just look at this silver bonbon dish. Feel how heavy it is, Larry. And this gold fruit basket. . . .

LARRY

That piece set somebody back a lot of jack.

FLO

(*Starting.*) Did you hear anything then?

LARRY

Not a thing—you're just nervous, that's all.

FLO

(*Pointing to dining-room door.*) Look out there. There might be servants.

LARRY

(*Crossing.*) All right, just to satisfy you. But if you can find a servant in this flat I'll eat him, or her, as the case may be. (*Sticks his head in door.*) All dark and quiet as a grave. Newlyweds like these folks don't want servants, at least till they get over the honeymoon stage.

FLO

(*Uneasily.*) So then we're practically safe, you think, Larry?

LARRY

Safe! Why, Flo, you're as safe as if you're in your mother's arms.

FLO

Hadn't we better start getting the stuff together?

LARRY

(*Removing his cap and sitting in armchair.*) What's the rush? We're sure they won't be back till after eleven. And if Fenton's not a piker he'll take his little bride for a bite to eat after the show—we got time to burn. (*Re-assured, Flo also sits.*)

FLO

Let's hope they like the show, because they've got an awful shock coming when they get back here.

LARRY

(*Lighting a cigarette.*) Don't worry about that. In their frame of mind they'll like anything, let alone "The Follies."

FLO

(*Crossing to escritoire.*) Oh, here are a lot of letters. Look, Larry, they're "thank you" notes for their wedding presents. Don't you imagine it's a lot of bother to write all of these?

LARRY

Well, one thing, Flo, when we get married, I don't guess you'll be kept up nights writing them.

FLO

(Picking letter at random.) Listen to this, Larry (Reads): "Dear Uncle Harvey and Aunt Ella, Conrad and I are so grateful to you both for sending us that beautiful steel engraving of The Battle of Waterloo for a wedding gift."

LARRY

That's good for a laugh.

FLO

(Continuing.) "Our only regret is that our tiny apartment is not large enough for us to hang it in. However, Conrad is going to earn just oodles of money, and soon we'll be able to move into an ancestral hall where your wonderful picture will have a prominent place. Until that time we are going to store your lovely present for safekeeping. Wish you were with us. Love from Conrad and Marcia."

LARRY

She ought to be in Congress with a line like that.

FLO

(Defensively.) Why, I think that's a nice letter. She just doesn't want to hurt their feelings.

LARRY

(Philosophically.) Well, you've got to take the blanks along with the prizes in this wedding present graft.

FLO

Want me to read some others?

LARRY

(Rising.) No, we might as well get to work. Bring over that suitcase and unstrap it.

FLO

Are we going to start with the silverware?

LARRY

(With a business-like air.) I'll tell you, you go in the bedroom and gather up the pretties. That's where you'll find

S. S.—Oct.—5

her jewelry—all she isn't wearing. I'll give this room the once-over and then clean up the dining-room.

FLO

(Starting to door.) I won't be long.

LARRY

All right, Flo, hop to it. Be sure the blinds are down. (Flo exits through door, right.)

(Larry walks about room picking up objects as if appraising them. He is thus engaged when there comes the sound of a key in lock of hall door. Larry whips out gun and puts on mask. He switches off light just before the door opens. The light is turned on again immediately. It is Conrad Fenton. He is an anæmic looking man in horn-rimmed glasses. He wears a dinner coat and carries his hat. He is apparently in a great hurry. As he crosses to table he almost stumbles over Larry, who is crouching behind armchair.)

CONRAD

(Discovering Larry.) My God!

LARRY

(Covering him with gun.) Put up your hands! (Conrad quickly obeys.)

CONRAD

You—you—aren't going to shoot me?

LARRY

Not if you do just as I tell you. Keep those hands up. (Pokes him in ribs with gun.) Higher!

CONRAD

(Straining.) That's as high as I can reach.

LARRY

(Pointing to chair.) Sit down!

CONRAD

(Diffidently.) May I lower my hands now? I won't interfere with you.

LARRY

(*Gruffly.*) You keep those hands up till I say for you to let them down.

CONRAD

(*Helplessly.*) My dear man, you really must let me go—my wife's waiting for me.

LARRY

What in hell did you come back for?

CONRAD

I forgot our theater tickets.

LARRY

Forgot your tickets!

CONRAD

You see, my wife and I were going to the theater this evening and in the confusion of departure she laid the tickets there on the table, and—well, I just forgot to pick them up again.

LARRY

(*Disgustedly.*) Why, you poor dumb-bell!

CONRAD

I know it was stupid of me.

LARRY

You ought to take a course in memory training. (*Conrad doesn't answer.*)

LARRY

(*Angrily.*) Don't think that I'm going to give up this job just because you happened to come back.

CONRAD

(*Fatuously.*) I didn't suppose I could expect that. May I lower my arms now? They're positively growing numb.

LARRY

Not if you consider your life worth anything.

CONRAD

I've got to get word to Marcia—really.

LARRY

Now that you're here, you're in for the evening—make up your mind to that.

CONRAD

(*Protestingly.*) But Marcia's at the subway station waiting for me. She'll wonder what's delaying me.

LARRY

Well, she'll have to take it out in wondering.

CONRAD

(*Greatly perturbed.*) Really, you're taking an unfair advantage of me. I've never kept Marcia waiting before.

(*Flo re-enters carrying lingerie and boxes. Seeing Conrad she gives a scream and drops packages.*)

LARRY

(*Turning.*) Control yourself, will you? I've got one nut on my hands now.

FLO

Oh, Larry, I told you something would happen!

LARRY

Nothing's happened. Calm down, put on your mask.

FLO

(*Coming forward.*) But who is he?

LARRY

It's Fenton, himself. (*To Conrad.*) That's your name, isn't it?

CONRAD

(*Meekly.*) Yes, sir.

FLO

But I thought they had gone to the show! We saw them leave.

LARRY

We didn't take it into account that Mr. Fenton was weak-minded. He forgot his tickets, and had to come back

for them. He's got his wife parked down at the subway. I suppose she'll be up here next.

CONRAD

I'm sorry if I'm a bother to you, but I really must be allowed to lower my arms. They feel as if they would drop off.

LARRY

I guess we can oblige you now. Flo, just go through Mr. Fenton's pockets and see if he is carrying any artillery. (Flo obeys gingerly.)

CONRAD

I assure you I have no weapons whatever.

LARRY

Now, Flo, get one of those runners over there off of the table, and we'll tie Mr. Fenton up, so he'll be more comfortable. (To Conrad.) All right, you can lower your hands now. (Flo takes one of the table runners, passes it about Fenton's middle, over his arms.)

LARRY

Tie it good and tight.

FLO

I don't want to hurt him.

CONRAD

It's quite all right—you're not hurting me.

LARRY

Say, this is no tea party! Hurry up, Flo, get that junk in the suitcase. (There is a ring at the hall door.)

CONRAD

(Nervously.) That must be Marcia now. She probably worried to death about me.

LARRY

(Whispering.) You call out and ask her—to make sure.

CONRAD

I want to beg you not to be harsh

with her. You see, it's the first time we've ever had burglars. And she's so young and inexperienced. . . .

LARRY

(Impatiently.) I'll take care of that. Call to her.

CONRAD

(In honeymoon tones.) Is that you, darling?

MARCI

(Off.) Oh, Conrad, how could you leave me waiting all this time!

CONRAD

(To Larry.) I've never disappointed her before.

LARRY

All right, Flo, let her in.

(Flo goes to door. Enters Marcia. She is a cuddly little thing with blonde hair. She is wearing a light blue opera cloak. She stifles a scream as she takes in the situation.)

LARRY

(Brandishing gun.) I don't want to scare you, Mrs. Fenton, but you'll have to cut out that yelling.

CONRAD

Don't scream, dearest, everything will be all right.

MARCI

(Throwing her arms about her husband's neck.) Oh, Conrad, I'm so frightened!

LARRY

Don't worry, we aren't going to do anything if you behave.

MARCI

Are you hurt, Conrad? Speak to your wife!

CONRAD

No, Marcia, I'm all right.

MARCIA

Oh, what have they done to you, dearest?

CONRAD

I've no complaint to make. As burglars go I've found them quite considerate.

MARCIA

(Looking at Larry wildly.) We're being robbed?

LARRY

(Brusquely.) Ssh, soft pedal on that talk!

CONRAD

(Aside to Larry.) She'll be all right in a minute—it's just the shock. . . . (Marcia still clings to her husband.)

MARCIA

(Sobbing hysterically.) I feel as if I were going to faint.

CONRAD

(Same vein.) Would you mind getting a glass of water for her—in the bathroom.

LARRY

(Singing.) All right, Flo. (Flo nods and goes out dining-room door.)

CONRAD

(Soothingly.) There, there, pet. They don't mean to harm us.

LARRY

(Sheepishly.) I'm afraid, Mrs. Fenton, you'll have to let us tie you up, like your husband. (Marcia gives a little moan.)

CONRAD

(As if he were addressing a child.) You won't mind it a bit, Marcia, when you get used to it. You can sit right down here beside me in that chair and they'll tie you with the other table runner, just like me. (To Larry.) Won't you?

LARRY

Sure, we'll make you as comfortable as we can. (Flo re-enters with glass of water.)

LARRY

Take a sup of water, you'll feel better. (Marcia barely wets her lips, and immediately shows signs of rapid recovery.)

CONRAD

You'll let them tie you now, won't you, darling?

MARCIA

Yes, dearest, if you say so.

LARRY

All right, Flo, the other runner. (Flo starts to put runner about Marcia's waist.)

MARCIA

(To Larry.) May I take off my opera cloak first?

CONRAD

(Hastily.) Oh, I wouldn't, darling.

MARCIA

But I'm so warm. (Marcia removes cloak. She is dressed in an outre evening gown; a handsome rope of pearls hangs about her neck.)

LARRY

(Seeing pearls.) Oh, so that's why your husband didn't want you to take off your cape. No wonder! (To Conrad.) You're not such a fool as you look, are you? (Flo binds Marcia with runner. Then, she and Larry stand back to survey their prisoners.)

LARRY

(To Flo.) Well, I guess we can go ahead now.

FLO

(Astonishedly.) You mean, we're going to rob them before their very eyes!

LARRY

Why not? It's not our fault they came back.

FLO

Oh, but it's different now.

LARRY

I don't see how.

FLO

I'm no angel, Larry, but I haven't got the heart to steal with them watching us.

LARRY

If they don't like it they can close their eyes.

FLO

I can't do it, Larry.

LARRY

(Crossly.) Say, are you going to act up? I've had about all the trouble I can stand already this evening without you, too.

FLO

But I didn't know things were going to turn out like this.

LARRY

You're making a monkey out of us before these people. We're a couple of swell burglars, we are! Now you do as I say; go over and get those pearls from around Mrs. Fenton's neck. (Marcia and Conrad exchange frightened glances.)

CONRAD

You wouldn't take *them*—they're a wedding present from her father!

MARCIA

(Chiming in.) And cost a great deal. (Marcia bites her lip in dismay as she realizes what she has said.)

LARRY

You two keep out of this! Go on, Flo, get them.

LARRY

(Disgustedly.) Well, I'll be damned! If I'd thought you'd turn so chicken-hearted all of a sudden, you'd never got to come tonight. (Flo bursts into tears and falls to the floor sobbing.)

LARRY

(Alarmed.) Oh, come on, Flo, this won't do! Never mind, I was just kidding; you don't have to take the pearls. (Helping Flo to her feet.) My God, what a mess we're making of this!

MARCIA

(Angrily.) I think you're a brute to make her cry like that, so there!

CONRAD

(Aside.) Ssh, Marcia!

LARRY

(To Marcia.) If you don't keep out of this, I'll put a gag in your mouth! (Changing tone.) Now be reasonable, Flo. We went to a lot of trouble and expense to frame up this job, and you surely don't want to leave now, empty-handed. Why, it would be criminal!

FLO

(Sniffling.) Oh, I don't know what I want. It's just my nerves are upset. But, Larry, I can't have a hand in stealing the wedding presents since I've seen how things are. This couple have just set up housekeeping, and are starting out in life—

LARRY

All married people are up against the same thing.

FLO

It's too near our own wedding—maybe that's why I feel this way. But I know that I could never marry you if you robbed these people, I know it.

LARRY

(Dejectedly.) Well, Flo, you've got me—I don't know what to do about it.

MARCIA

May I speak to you a moment? I've just thought of something.

CONRAD

(Nervously.) I wouldn't say anything if I were you, darling.

LARRY

You've talked entirely too much, as it is.

FLO

Go on, Larry, let her speak. (Larry merely shrugs his shoulders.)

MARCIA

(Brightly.) I've just had an idea. Conrad, we have so many wedding presents that they're a nuisance. Why couldn't we let them take a few we don't need?

CONRAD

Why, darling—!

LARRY

(Sarcastically.) You mean—take enough to pay us for our time and trouble for breaking in here tonight.

MARCIA

(Naïvely.) Well, yes, if you want to put it that way. You see, Conrad and I have so many friends and relatives that we just got stacks of presents that we've no use for whatever. It would really be doing us a favor if you'd steal some from us.

LARRY

(Amused in spite of himself.) Well, that is an idea now.

MARCIA

We'd already thought some of selling part of them, but we were afraid of being found out, and we wouldn't hurt the feelings of our relatives for worlds. They meant to be so nice, poor dears.

CONRAD

I'm sure I shouldn't mind if a few of

those cut-glass nut bowls were to disappear.

MARCIA

Just as you said, Conrad, so many of our presents are just white elephants on our hands. There doesn't seem to be any way of getting rid of them without making someone you love feel badly.

CONRAD

Well, do what you please, dearest.

MARCIA

(Enthusiastically.) And just think, if some of our presents were stolen we'd get money for them!

CONRAD

What!

MARCIA

Didn't father say that he had taken out burglar insurance on all our presents?

CONRAD

That's true; he's had everything insured for us.

MARCIA

Well, don't you see that if they take some of our things—things we don't want anyhow—the insurance company will pay us back?

CONRAD

Why, dearest, I'm—I don't know what to say!

LARRY

(Admiringly.) Say, you've got some head on you!

MARCIA

(To Flo.) You wouldn't mind stealing some of our things if we gave you permission, would you?

FLO

(Sweetly.) Certainly not.

LARRY

(*Graciously.*) What do you think we ought to start in to take, Mrs. Fenton?

MARCIA

Let me see, there's so much I hardly know what to tell you. Over there on the tea-cart you'll find three silver water-bottles. Leave us the one that's engraved, and you may have the other two. . . . (*Flo goes to fetch water-bottles.*)

CONRAD

(*Anxiously.*) Really, dearest, do you think this is a wise plan?

MARCIA

Please don't interrupt, Conrad. You've said yourself a hundred times that you wished we had the money instead of so many useless things. Now that we have the chance I mean to take it, and do these burglars a good turn in the bargain.

CONRAD

But do you think it's honest to aid them, and then collect insurance money?

LARRY

(*Sternly.*) That's a mere technicality, Mr. Fenton. Your wife is entirely within her rights. You're both tied and helpless, aren't you? What the insurance company doesn't know won't hurt it.

MARCIA

(*To Larry.*) In those four long boxes over there are solid silver salad sets; just leave us the Jacobean pattern—it matches our other silver. Then, you'll find three Venetian glass vases, two cocoa sets—take them both—a half dozen berry spoons, three sets of candlesticks, seven pickle forks, two fruit dishes, an electric toaster, four cheese knives—

LARRY

(*Excitedly.*) Wait a minute, wait a minute! You're coming too fast.

FLO

(*Collecting*) . . . seven pickle forks, four cheese knives. . . .

(*Larry and Flo are feverishly picking up the articles she names and depositing them in suitcase.*)

MARCIA

(*Aside to Conrad.*) Isn't it wonderful I thought of this idea!

CONRAD

(*Grimly.*) Well, it seems to be an effective means of exterminating our white elephants.

LARRY

(*Rubbing his hands together.*) Now is there anything else, Mrs. Fenton?

MARCIA

(*Thoughtfully.*) Would you be interested in hand-painted china? We've no end of that stored there under the chaise-longue. And it's very expensive.

LARRY

(*Apologetically.*) I'd rather not bother with it, if you don't mind. You see, it's a bit out of date.

CONRAD

You're quite right. Most of it's a present from Uncle Hubert out in Iowa. He never did have a taste for anything but raising prize hogs.

MARCIA

Conrad, would you mind if they took the silver punch bowl and cups the boys at the office sent us?

CONRAD

I don't like to say, Marcia. It seems so heartless to—

MARCIA

But you know as well as I do that it's hideous! (*To Larry.*) Perhaps you'd like to have a look at it—you'll find it on the sideboard in the dining-room.

LARRY

(Gallantly.) Maybe you'd rather I wouldn't prowl around your house alone. I'll let you loose and you can show it to me yourself. (Larry unties Marcia.)

MARCIA

(Rising.) Oh, thank you. (Crossing to dining-room door.) We've any number of flat pieces of Sheffield in here, too, that I wish you'd see if you care to have; also a handsome chafing-dish that I've absolutely no use for. You might as well have it as the grocery boy or iceman. . . . (Marcia exits talking, followed by Larry.)

(Flo has been busying herself packing the suitcase.)

CONRAD

(Diffidently.) I wonder if you'd be so good as to loose me, too. I'm getting a trifle cramped.

FLO

I don't see why not—Larry let your wife go. (Flo releases Conrad, who rises and stretches.)

(Laughter heard coming from dining-room.)

CONRAD

(With a tinge of jealousy.) They seem to be getting on together famously.

FLO

You needn't worry, Larry's just jollying her up a bit. It's his way.

CONRAD

Something has been puzzling me considerably. Tell me, how did you and er—er Larry know that we were going to be out this evening?

FLO

To the theater, you mean?

CONRAD

Yes, I'm just curious to know.

FLO

Well, if you want the truth: Larry sent you those tickets for "The Follies."

CONRAD

(Astounded.) What's that!

FLO

It was my idea. And a pretty expensive way of getting you two away from home, but we wanted to play safe.

CONRAD

But Marcia told me they were sent by a friend of hers at the Globe Theater.

FLO

That's what Larry told her over the phone when he said he was mailing them to you.

CONRAD

(Picking up tickets from table.) Why, I can't believe it possible.

FLO

I'll prove it—they're number D12 and 14—\$5.50 each.

CONRAD

(Surveying tickets.) By Jove, that's right!

FLO

It ought to teach you, Mr. Fenton, to be suspicious of everything you get for nothing.

CONRAD

Of course, it was a ruthless and unscrupulous trick, but I must admit that you're certainly a clever person.

(Re-enter Marcia and Larry chatting affably. They are loaded down with silver, boxes, etc.)

MARCIA

(Smiling up at Larry.) You're certainly a clever person!

LARRY

(Deprecatingly.) Well, hardly clever.

MARCIA

Conrad, I just asked Mr. Larry how he liked being a burglar, and just like that he said, "Oh, it's all right, but it keeps me up nights."

(*No one laughs but Marcia.*)

FLO

Larry's always pulling that one.

(*Larry is busily packing the last of the wedding presents in suitcase.*)

LARRY

That must be about all now, isn't it, Mrs. Fenton?

MARCIA

(*To Conrad.*) Can you think of anything else, darling?

CONRAD

What about that red floor lamp that Cousin Walter sent us?

LARRY

I'd like to oblige you, but we can't take anything else. We'll have hard enough sledding getting away now. This suitcase weighs a ton.

MARCIA

(*To Larry.*) We're going to have to be bound again, aren't we? Just for the appearance of the thing, you know. . . .

LARRY

(*Business with suitcase.*) By all means—it almost slipped my mind. You fix them up, Flo. And when we make out getaway I'll phone down to headquarters and tell them to come and release you. Remember, put up a big howl, and when they ask you for a description of the crooks, tell them they were two tall men with beards, or something like that.

(*Conrad and Marcia are again tied to chairs.*)

MARCIA

Won't it be thrilling when the police break in and rescue us? It's like the movies.

CONRAD

(*Lugubriously.*) I suppose it'll be in all the papers tomorrow.

(*Larry and Flo. prepare to leave.*)

LARRY

Well, Flo, we might as well be getting on. Here's hoping you two have a long and happy married life.

MARCIA

(*Sweetly.*) Same to you, and thank you again, for this evening.

LARRY

Oh, don't mention it.

CONRAD

I say, old man, just reach down in my waistcoat pocket—at the right—

LARRY

(*Pulling out bills.*) It's money—eleven bucks.

CONRAD

You take it—Miss Flo told me about the theater tickets. I don't want you to be at any expense on our account.

LARRY

(*Returning bills to pocket.*) Couldn't think of taking your money. I guess we can just add that to profit and loss.

CONRAD

I wish you would, really.

MARCIA

(*Puzzled.*) What are you two talking about?

LARRY

Your husband can explain that to you later. Ready, Flo? Well, so long.

MARCIA

Good-bye, and good luck!

FLO

Good-bye.

CONRAD

Don't forget to telephone the police.

(*Larry goes out hall door staggering under weight of suitcase. Flo follows.*)

(*There is a short pause.*)

MARCIA

(*Meditatively.*) Conrad, wasn't he a fascinating man? It's too bad that he has to make his living by being a burglar.

CONRAD

Yes, I hope he won't forget to notify the police he's robbed us.

MARCIA

All my life I've had a wrong impression of burglars. After all, they're just folks—like us. They don't frighten you a bit when you come to know them.

(*There is another pause.*)

MARCIA

(*Struggling to raise her hand.*) Ow, my nose itches! Wasn't it lucky that I

thought of that plan to have them steal all those presents we'd no use for?

CONRAD

(*With preoccupied air.*) Yes, dearest, I suppose so.

MARCIA

And now, look at all the money we'll get from the insurance company. You can buy me that fur coat I've been wanting.

(*Still another pause.*)

MARCIA

(*Sighing.*) Oh, dear, I did so want to see "The Follies" tonight. What did Larry mean a while ago—about the tickets?

CONRAD

That's a peculiar thing. You see, dearest, he wanted to be sure that we wouldn't be at home when they came to steal our wedding presents; so he just called you up yesterday and. . . .

(*Conrad continues his narrative as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS



**L**AW of probability—Something which points out that out of the one million marriages which take place every year, in only one or two instances will the resulting scandals be exciting enough to occupy front pages in the papers.



**H**ISTORY is mainly an account of what the strong have done to the weak and what the cunning have done to the strong.



# The Vamp

*By Mabel McElliott*

**S**HE surveyed herself carefully in the inadequate mirror the office lavatory afforded. Heavens! Had her hair been in that state when What-sha-may-call-'im—Mr. Porter—had been talking to her?

And her nose was faintly shiny, too! She retrieved from the depths of an enormously untidy bag "doreen" boxes of powder and of rouge; a lip stick. (Soap was not in her makeup kit.)

She carefully applied the red substance; made "cheeks" of vivid hue; applied the powder puff with the air of a priest performing a rite: eked out the meager color in her lips with the thin pencil of rouge paste. The job was done!

But not quite finished, either. She found it necessary to go over this human portrait with her rather limp handkerchief, altering a tint here and there, blending the colors until her pert, rather piquant little face had the look of a work of nature, rather than a work of art.

She smiled at herself in the glass, not from pleasure at the sight she contemplated, but as practice. Her smile had been remarked. She did well to keep her hand in.

She tried it again. This time with a subtler shading. The first one had been an expression of pure joy, an artless smile, showing "pearly teeth." (That, at least, was what she called them, to herself.)

The second might be differently interpreted. Therein lurked a soupcon of sadness: a hint of irony: something that smacked faintly of renunciation and tears. She rather liked that, and tried it again.

She had to readjust her features

hastily, to conform to the presence of an invader. She pretended to be removing a speck of dust from her eye, leaning close to the mirror, delicately flecking at the lash with her extremely catholic handkerchief.

The newcomer eyed her with distrust. She was a girl from the auditing department, a brash young woman who gave the impression of having arms perpetually akimbo, although this was not so, really.

Nedda did not like her. She suspected a sardonic grin (and no practised one!) lurked always around that wide, flower-fluted mouth. The other flung herself down on the battered couch, fished capably in the pocket of the utilitarian black apron she wore over her cheap, bright, printed georgette frock, and produced a packet of cigarettes.

She did not offer one to Nedda, as she would have done to any member of her own "crowd." They "did not speak," although each knew perfectly the other's name, age and previous condition of servitude.

Nedda, however, was a stenographer in the front office. Gulfs yawned between them. Outside the place she spoke of herself as "a private secretary"—gave herself little airs because of this. The other (her name was Hattie Rand) sensed the airs, although of course she never heard Nedda's consciously superior estimates of herself.

Nedda frantically wanted a cigarette. It was her pleasure sometimes to pretend that she did not smoke—depending entirely on the prejudices of the man whose company she happened to be enjoying—but at that moment she

was almost willing to declare a truce with her ancient enemy in order to obtain one.

But of course she did not. With a final flick at the imaginary speck of foreign matter, a final pat to her distended, netted coiffure, a final alert glance at the juxtaposition of blouse and skirt belt, she departed. She would have sworn she heard the other sniff contemptuously as the door swung to after her. . . .

However, she dismissed the matter as of no moment. There were more important concerns before her. It was at this time of day young Mr. Manly came in to "give dictation." For this was the careful toilette, the intent scrutiny. To this end was the portrait painted, the finishing touches given.

It was surpassingly difficult for her to understand just how young Mr. Manly had been able to withstand her charms this long while. Why, here it was June, and he had been giving her letters since 'way back in February, when he came to Robson-Marritts'. Always before this her piquant ways, her ready and omnipresent smile, the sweet, sirupy voice she cultivated, all these had served her well.

She had only to try one of these agents, for instance, on Harry Sander-son, and he was eating out of her hand, as she expressed it, inelegantly, to herself.

Wasn't she known all over the building, jovially, as "the vamp"? Hadn't every man in the place, from elevator boy to the head of the sales department, a smile and a bow for her? Wasn't it "And how's the pretty girl this morn-ing" from one day's end to the other?

*She* couldn't help it if other girls disliked her, invariably. *She* couldn't prevent men from staring and ogling and stooping over her desk to "date her up." Of course they saw she was "more refined" than any of the other girls in her department. Of course they recog-nized her superiority. She let little things drop about reading Robert W. Cham-bers and Harold Bell Wright, and lov-ing music, and Serviss's poems, and

Kipling. She admitted a fondness for nature, and found that remarks about a sunset always took effect.

A homely girl, she knew, could talk about a sunset to a man . . . and fall flat—absolutely flat. Bore him to death. But when you lifted cerulean eyes at them (as she did) and caught your lip thoughtfully between your teeth (as she did) and described the lurid departure of old Sol in your soothing, sirupy voice—why, they fell.

Then, too, everyone was made prop-erly aware of the fact that her educa-tion had been quite . . . oh, quite out of the ordinary. She cried "*mon Dieu*" prettily when the bookkeeper spilled ink on her lilac linen; and in a day or two he, Andrew, had spread the news of her excellent accent all over the place. An-drew did not know that she spelled be-trayed "be betrayed," nor that she had not the faintest idea where commas should and should not be placed, but that was no matter.

She gave it out that her French had been acquired at a "finishing school," and sighed charmingly when speaking of "when papa had money." This al-ways impressed them, she knew.

No one in the building was more popular, more feted, than she. There-fore Manly's failure to capitulate was the more annoying.

He came, as usual, at three, with his correspondence. A somberly handsome young man, with dark brows, and an air that was not diffidence, but reserve, he strongly appealed to Nedda's avidly ro-mantic soul.

She had bedewed herself with eau de violette, another of her artless wiles. She shot back her spotless cuffs, laid her rather plump, but undeniably soft little hand at a becoming angle on the dark mahogany of her desk . . . and waited.

The young man seemed to have diffi-culty collecting his thoughts. He tapped the papers he carried, gazed at (or through) her with a manner of profound absorption.

Nedda was glad of the special pains she had taken with her complexion. She

tried a trick she had learned from the heroine of one of the novels she had just laid down. Flashed her lashes suddenly down on her cheek, and raised them with dazzling suddenness. At least, the author of the book had said the result was dazzling. It was not the sort of thing you could determine for yourself, in the mirror, since your eyes were closed during the most important part of the proceeding. However, she had faith in it.

The young man began to speak. Rapidly . . . with ease. He had a graceful flow of language, and Nedda rather enjoyed listening to him, and putting it down, although she did not always know what it was all about. Then, too, he was given to strange words, which necessitated tiring trips to the dictionary.

She coquettled with him in the intervals. Inquired after his health. With a super-refinement of accent, asked him where he intended to spend his vacation. He was enormously polite, but none of her sallies met with marked success.

After he had gone, she mused on his behavior with some annoyance. Thus might a general, contemplating the fail-

ure of his troops, survey the scene. She was, by all odds, the office siren . . . the finished coquette. . . . This failure maddened her.

Or was it failure? Was it not that the young man ardently desired her society but, placing her on a pedestal of his own making, hesitated to make advances? She hugged the thought.

The buzzer on her desk rang imperatively—twice—three times. That was the front office call. A sheaf of letters in her hand, she went leisurely to answer it, teetering uncertainly on proud French heels.

Voices in the inner sanctum assailed her as she paused at Manly's desk. Of course she did not eavesdrop . . . oh, never . . . but she caught her name . . . waited with a complacent smile for the words of praise which were certain to follow. . . .

Manly's voice—

"Little idiot," he was growling to his chief. "If she doesn't stop using that damned cheap scent I'll have to put on a gas mask before I give her my work. I wish to the Lord you'd fire her . . . the saphead!"



## Echo

*By Ward Twichell*

**P**AN he has gone with his piping,  
But where that he has gone  
Only the wise old pope might say—  
But best leave the pope alone.

Best leave the pope at his altars,  
With his eyes darkened and dim,  
Dreaming a twilight of Tempe  
And a sweet piped vale hymn.



# Babylon

*By T. F. Mitchell*

**H**E had traveled widely all over the United States. He knew intimately the different charm and different atmosphere of all the big cities. He had been manhandled by the police in Chicago. He had lost his watch and his consciousness in the Denver red light district. He had been dumped into a bayou near New Orleans by young toughs. He had been swindled by Chinamen in San Francisco. He had been given a black eye by negroes in

Washington. He had been downed by a speeding flivver in Detroit. He had barely escaped with his life from the center of a strike riot in Pittsburgh. He had been hazed by sophomores in Boston. Only Providence saved him from being lynched as a horse thief in Cheyenne. Then he came to New York, the wickedest city in America, and lived there a month without having even the girl at the hotel cigar stand wink at him.



# The Gipsy

*By A. Newberry Choyce*

**H**E'LL spread you a carpet woven wide  
But what if it came to pass  
That your brown feet went unsatisfied  
And ached for the cool sweet grass.

And he will give you a golden cup  
And a silver dish for your meat;  
But gall is a sorrowful drink to sup  
And rue o'er-bitter to eat.

And I would have given you the sun's gold bars  
And a tree to cover your head,  
And a silver moon, and a million stars  
To candle you to bed.



# Rose de Nuit

[An Essay]

By Reginald Wright Kauffman

## I.

DAPHNE had never used essences: "A woman smells best," I bravely quoted old Guivarra, "when she has no perfume at all."

It was Spring, and I was in New York. It was the first time that Spring and I had been in New York together since crimson war took me back to France. Place and season leagued for my betrayal: I would call on Daphne and dine with her, just as I used to do.

Then, at the first corner, I passed a scent-shop. . . .

## II.

ALL passions have their dark roots in some obscure need—self preservation, propagation: we could dig them up were we only a little wiser—but the perfume-passion goes deeper than most. Zola understood that: he would tell you how a place smelt before he told you how it looked. Was it to follow their enemies, like the wolf, or to confuse their own trail as the cuttle-fish hides in his sepia, that nearly all the mammals were first given delicate olfactory nerves and then decreed to secrete odours? The male musk-deer commands his oil-pod; they try, with half success, to domesticate the civet, but, when they drain his offensive distillations, he must foresee the destined transmutation into the flower-scents of this Fifth Avenue shop, for the civet remains rapacious, agile, cunning—and the civet used his store for the second of the two great primal needs.

"Ten civet cats will hardly make her sweet," wrote the Earl of Dorset in 1686: that was a poem scarce any other line of which would 1920 dare to repeat, but in 1920, willy-nilly, every man-jack of us, and every lass-jane, retains something of the otherwise distinctive functions of musk-deer and civet.

Good Dr. Septimus Piesse tried even to set the perfume-passion to music.

"Scents, like sounds," said he, "appear to influence the olfactory nerves in definite degrees."

So he classified forty odours and evolved the Odophone: almond, heliotrope, vanilla and orange-blossom "blend together, each producing different degrees of a nearly similar impression, citron, lemon, orange-peel and verbena forming a higher octave"; rose and rose-geranium are semi-odours for half-notes—"petty grain, neroli a black key, followed by fleur d'orange." Sharp smells are high notes, heavy smells low.

"For example, treble clef note E (4th space) corresponds with Portugal (orange), note D (1st space below clef) with violet, note F (4th space above clef) with ambergris . . . Santal, geranium, acacia, orange-flower, camphor, corresponding with C (bass, 2nd line below), C (bass, 2nd space), E (treble, 1st line), G (treble, 2nd line), C (treble, 3rd space), constitute the bouquet of chord C."

Thus are discords also possible in perfumery; thus, too, perhaps, has taste risen in odours as in music, though more slowly, and so, it may be, would our Doctor account for fashions in scents and explain how the now intol-

erable root of valerian was, in the Sixteenth Century, placed in clothes-chests, as our immediate forebears placed lavender. You might ask of the mercantile child of Septimus's begetting; he still bears the family name in London: I owe him half a guinea.

### III.

"A WOMAN smells best," I repeated, "when she has no perfume at all."

My resolution seemed so sweetly reasonable. Over the telephone, Daphne had told me that she, too, was returned from the wars—her campaign had been a series of raids upon the Pacific Coast with a new play from an old book—and over the telephone her voice sounded as it sounded in 1913. The Avenue, as I stemmed it, was the old panting Avenue:

"Forever panting and forever young."

From the day's labor of Wall Street or of shopping, the massed motor cars were all going my way. Renwick's twin steeples of St. Patrick nodded to me across the golden afternoon . . .

### IV.

It is strange how sweet scents have always clung about religion. There were aromatic odours, surely, at the wicked Egyptians' Festival of Bubastes, at the wanton rites of Mylitta in Chaldaea and of Astarte in Phoenicia and at Carthage. Those naughty priestesses of fertile Ishtar of Babylon must have anointed themselves with pleasant unguents. Essences, one guesses from Pindar, played parts in the service of Corinth's Aphrodite Pandemos; I have seen the double Jasmine *moogree* become votive to the Hindu Vishnu.

"To perfume," indeed, means "to smoke thoroughly"; the earliest perfumes were burning wood and aromatic gums, and Maimonides vows that incense, which Chaucer better spells "encens," came in with sacrifices, to conceal the smells of them. The

Jews used it daily: "They shall put incense before Thee," promised Moses, and David the King pleaded that his prayers might be set before Jehovah "as the incense"; one special family had the secret of preparing the Jews' incense—the family-honour, which they refused to sell for a proffered fortune—it was, indeed, the *Wise Men* that brought myrrh and frankincense to our newborn Lord, and to the prophetic ointment poured upon the feet of the doomed Christ only an Oberammergau Judas is named as objecting.

The somber sects have forgotten it, but, from Christianity's beginning—from the Patmos-visions of the Four Beasts and Four-and-twenty Elders, of the Angel of the Golden Censer—incense has shadowed forth the supplication of the faithful, the Communion of the Saints. "The odour of spices burned"—it is Skeat's definition—holds high place in the earliest services, in the Divine Liturgies of St. James, of St. John the Golden-mouthed, Patriarch of Constantinople, and of St. Basil the Great, of Caesarea-in-Cappadocia: it purified the first funerals, it was used at the first Masses.

It will be used at the last. Throughout the Western Catholic Church and in the "higher" manifestations of the Anglican Rite, the liberation of incense not only precedes the reading of the Holy Gospels, not only edulcorates the people; censing begins immediately the clergy ascends the altar-steps:

"The priest censes the oblations; then proceeds to cense the altar-cross, and then the altar itself, first on the Epistle and then on the Gospel side; the deacon, having censed the celebrant, goes to cense the choir and on his return censes the sub-deacon and is himself censed by the thurifer."

It is so in my own Church, the Eastern, and more so, for there perfumes are an ingredient of the Holy Oils, made and blessed once in three years, at Eastertide. On the Monday morning, the Metropolitan enters the Sacristy of the Patriarchs, lights a fire and, reading the while the Holy Gospel for that day, pours into a great cauldron

the Myro, or Chrism-to-be, which boils thenceforth for seventy-two hours, ceaselessly stirred by ladles of precious metal in the hands of relayed monkish vigilants. Six deacons next, in vestments black and silver, place the Myro in twin silver receptacles and stir it over a porcelain stove. In the Russian scene, at Moscow or at Kief, while thousands attend, eager to dip bits of cotton in the sacred mixture, the oil is finally poured into the priceless vase presented by the great Empress Catherine. It is blessed, and on Thursday afternoon is carried in procession to the cathedral, where the Metropolitan celebrates the Liturgy. Pure olive oil is the Myro, blended with white wine of Lisbon and a perfume chosen by the Church.

## V.

THE Odour of Sanctity! I wondered, on my Avenue way, whether the clothes of clerics, whether their very skin, could not account for it by incense-impregnation. . . .

## VI.

IT is written: "When the body of a good man dies, God will not suffer His holy one to see corruption . . . it exhales a sweet odour." How the belief persists, through all hagiographies, down all the Christian centuries, from that morning when the two Marys brought spices to the Tomb!

Pleasant after three hundred years were the corpses of Sts. Gervasius and Protasius, whom Nero slew, and after four hundred and fifty that of the good day-laborer, St. Isidore of Madrid. It is St. Jerome, no less, "*Vita St. Hilarionis Ermitæ*," who witnesses to that holy man's possession of the strange fragrance at the disinterment by Isichus for the removal to Syria. Has not Eugippus told how St. Severin, exhumed by Onulf, was fragrant "though no embalmers' hand had ever touched" him? And St. Peter Thomas—*"comme un excellent parfum"*—and

peasant-born Ste. Gertrude of Ostend? When Bragadino, defender of St. Hilarion's Cyprus against Mustapha, was flayed alive and his head hung to the Turkish admiral's bowsprit, it was for three nights "engloried with rays like those of the sun and diffused a most marvelous fragrance": Pietro Justiniani says so, who smelled it. Long after death, Cardinal del Monte told Pope Gregory XV., St. Francis Xavier's body "had a ravishing perfume." Nay, even lay historians testify to lay instances, for, says the veracious Malory, "when Sir Boris and his fellows came to Sir Launcelot's bed, they found him"—that perfect lover—"stark dead, and the sweetest savour about him that ever they did smell."

Brave Polycarp's burning flesh smoked as with incense. The expiring St. Patrick filled "the room with a ravishing scent," and St. Clare of Ferriol so filled both church and chamber. The "*Acta Sanctorum*" narrates how all Brittany was ambrosial the day her St. Hubert died, and John of the Order of Jesus records that "odour exceeding in sweetness any earthly perfume," which, when St. Theressa gave up the ghost in Alva, a prioress noted in distant Segovia.

Nor yet alone these dead and dying. Living St. Valery—you may read it in "*Les Saints de Franche-Comté*"—had an aroma that commanded the reverent recognition of St. Columban. Whenever he said grace as sacristan, St. Hermann of Steinfield's effluvia were "*si ravissantes qu'il lui semblait être dans un jardin plein de roses, de lis, de violettes, d'oeillets, et de toutes sortes de fleurs les plus agréables*," and yet so humble was he withal that, "*Les Petites Bollandistes*" assure me, he thought all his brethren smelled as did he. St. Benedicta, whose breath and clothes and all that she touched were pleasantly redolent, says that she knows, "from personal observation, the odours of the Angelic Hierarchy differ as much as the perfumes of flowers"; she indicates the gradations, and Mgr. Guérin, Pope Leo XIII.'s Chamberlain, opined

that her scent and that of the High Celestial Powers "compose what is called 'The Bouquet of the Lake,' perceptible at a great distance."

The Odour of Sanctity! For my part, I doubt not there is also an Odour of Heresy: the Brothers of the Solidarity of the Blessed Sacrament "could detect a Jansenist by the smell"; it was at Worcester Hall that the English Cavaliers made their last stand for King Charles, and in the Worcester Corporation records there still exists this old charge: "Paid for pitch and rosin to perfume the Hall after the Scots, 2 shils."

Now, all women are naturally heretics—

### VII.

AND I was going to Daphne's!

But no: Daphne was essentially orthodox. She was so clean and fresh, so direct and so American—above all, so American! For a long two years I had been out of touch with American girls; it would be good to renew the acquaintance. There were no scents about Daphne and not much sensibility: she was all sense. A little inarticulate, perhaps, but then I could articulate for two—even for the always potential third of such arrangements.

The fact is, I had been in love with Daphne before the War, but I was timid in those old days. Now I was timid no more. I would tell Daphne. Perhaps I might even marry her.

Here, meanwhile, was another perfumery—no, a drug-shop; but its windows were full of essences. . . .

"Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart," said Solomon, and for many a century medical men agreed with him. Ferrerius mentions "an excellent confection" of his, all wine and saffron, which he prescribed for "dull, weak, feeble and dying men to smell to"; it served, he thought "*acque fere profusse olfactu, et potu.*" For days on end Democritos existed "on the mere effluvia of hot bread"; both Plutarch and Pliny cite an East Indian whose

sole diet was "pleasing odours"; the noble English Verulam's monumental work on life and death commends "all such cold smells as anyway serve to refrigerate the spirits," and the ever-admirable Burton affirmed that "odoraments to smell of, rose-water, violet-flowers, balm, rose-cakes, vinegar, etc., do much recreate the brains." It may be that physicians still extract the oil from jasmine-roots to arrest the secretion of milk; when, at any rate, the Egyptian doctors had finished with a man, their undertakers washed him again and again with rose-water—as, Homer says, the body of Hector was laved—and perfumed him with aloes and with incense.

These Avenue chemists were American.

In their windows were none of the heavy Turkish scents I used to know, no true attar of roses from Persia—the lives of 2,000 roses in each drachm—no Russian perfumes, Spanish or Italian! only some of the oils of eucalyptus from Tasmania rechristened in New York, one or two of the lesser English makeshifts and many native shams. Ten years since, in the city that Coleridge thought polluted the Rhine, I found forty makers of *eau de Cologne* "after the true recipé" either devised by the eighteenth-century Giovanna Maria Farina or appropriated by that Italian from Paul Feminis—and of the forty firm-names thirty-two were Farina. We are worse, however, than our yesterday's enemies: it hurts one's patriotism, our perfumery.

Nor were there any French scents in that window—

"But the less you think," said I, "of French scents, the better for you."

### VIII.

I RESOLVED not to think of them—and immediately my memory began to run from Piedmont to the Midi, through the fields of the perfume industry of France. I did not hear the clanking millions of napoleons that are its revenue, but I climbed again the

steep, the narrow and winding, streets of Grasse and looked from its hillside across the seven miles of figs and pomegranates, citrons, oranges, and lemons, to the azure Mediterranean.

Did the Sardinian Jews who founded it in the Sixth Century guess its destiny and its countryside's? If the Jews are indeed a people of figures, then those Jews were fortunate; they chose the one spot in the world where, the Iliad's Catalogue of the Ships to the contrary notwithstanding, quantity becomes romantic. Fancy a stock-market wherein "Atchison" and "U. S. Steel" are unmentioned, where the quotations are Heliotrope Preferred, Wallflower Common, Lily-of-the-Valley, Pink and Myrtle. Are Clove Sevens active? Will Honeysuckle rally? What great flower-prince is bulling Lilac? I can see the examination papers in their "business colleges"—even those abominable institutions of the contradictory name become poetic:

In 1860, one Cannes factory used 140,000 lbs. orange-blossoms; 20,000 lbs. acacia-blossoms; 140,000 lbs. rose-leaves; 32,000 lbs. jasmine-blossoms; 20,000 lbs. violets; 8,000 lbs. tube-roses. Allowing the normal annual increase, what amounts were used by the same factory in 1919?

In 1857, one French firm used 60,000 lbs. cassia and 16,000 lbs. lilac. What would be the net profit on these per item in the present market?

What was the average annual income for the last five years from the lavender-fields of Mitcham in Surrey?

The British Isles consumed 160,000 gals. perfumes in 1859. Compare this with their consumption in (a) 1912 and (b) 1917. State reasons for any increase or decrease.

Long ago, I visited a perfume-factory. M. le Comte, its bearded manager—yes, it was so long ago that the Frenchmen were bearded!—told me there were five sources for perfume.

There were the animal products: Civet, whereof we have already talked; Musk, the best being the Tong-king from China, for the Himalayan, exported from India, was a lesser "grade," and the Xabardine, brought out of Central Asia, *via* Russia, poor indeed (Oh, musk, said my Comte, was the veritable

basis for many a delicate scent!); Castor, not given by the abhorrent bean of aeroplanes and nurseries, but secreted in a beaver's preputial glands; and finally earthy Ambergris from the sea—ambergris that floats upon the waters, that men once said was solidified foam, that is used in Oriental cooking, that gives a floral touch to perfumes, and that issues from the intestines of a sick whale. Primitive, all of these.

Then, there were the essential oils, or attars—500 pounds of orange-blossoms gave two pounds of oil—mostly distilled, like *eau de Cologne*: from seeds, caraway and almond; from fruit, nutmeg and citron; from flowers, roses and lavender; from leaves, patchouli, thyme and bay; from barks, casarilla and cinnamon; from woods, santal, ligin-aloe and cedar. (A black-eyed salesgirl in the rue de la Paix once upon a time assured me that her *propriétaire* made 300 varieties!)

Next, said my Comte, came phili-come butters and oils—fats, liquid or solid, charged with odors. Violet, tube-rose, cassia and jasmine, he explained, yield no attar to distillation, or yield so little as to be too expensive; distilled orange-blossoms are unlike their pristine selves. For these and their ilk, then, "inflowering" is used: the flowers are soaked in heated greases. Gum-resins and balsams followed: peru, tolu, opopanax, myrrh, storax and Bruzoin. The triumph of modernity was the ultimate chemical invasion, barbarian products that swept upon the simpler and ancient forms with such rude names as nitro-benzol (false-almond), coumaric ambydride (coumarin), and that terrific vanillin, methyl-protocatechic aldehyde, a very Attila!

It was the Comte, I think, that told me of the difficulties with jasmine, the most loath of all flowers to surrender. Small wonder the Arabian and Persian poets sang jasmine! I recalled it—how I recalled it!—in Tunis; but the Comte said the essential oil of it there distilled was far too costly for European com-

merce: it sold at nearly a thousand francs the ounce. At Cannes or Grasse, said he, an acre of jasmine yielded 500 pounds of blossoms in one season, but, for manufacture, inflowering was employed. Jasmine was almost the sole flower whose scent could not be counterfeited by combinations of other odors.

"The common roseleaf-geranium," he proudly admitted under absinthe, "very often becomes 'Rose.' There are half-a-dozen elements in what you call 'Magnolia'—but no magnolia. True lily and eglantine evaporate too briskly. We mix oil of neroli and of lemon-grass with *esprit de rose*, add a trio of secret extracts of our own pomatumis, and, behold, we give you a better 'Sweet-briar' than Nature!"

#### IX.

HERE on the Avenue I was all for Nature. Scent: why the very spelling is false! We still write "scythe"; in the seventeenth century we wrote "scite" and "scituation"; "scent" came to us clean; the Ghost of Hamlet's father is the only one of Shakespeare's characters to employ the word, and in the 1623 edition, he said: "I sent the morning air"; but we have corrupted it. Symbolically? I wondered! If, I reflected, they knew the basis of perfumes, if they knew whence come musk and civet and castor, how long would Pussyfoot Johnson, Raymond Fosdick and whoever is Comstock now—how long would the American Prohibitors permit sweet odours?

#### A Twentieth Amendment!

Why, flowers were the symbol of those Hellenic girls who were not what they should be; their servants scattered saffron before them in the street, so that its fragrance hung about the scanty skirts of them for whose benefit even stern Solon made laws, and about the temple that, from their earnings, the Dicteriades built to Aphrodite. Had not the little ladies of Lesbos their perfumes? The letters of Alciphron tell how, at the manless festivals of Venus Peribasia, the celebrating

Ionican and Phrygian flute players garnished with grateful odours a banquet lasting from dusk till dawn—and it was a flute-player that publicly conquered the disciple of Zeno, it was one of the Aulectrides that the Athenians defied in Lamia, the Blood-sucker. Not until the Pisistratidæ gave the Dicteriades banquet-couches beside their *grandes dames* did perfumes enter really good society.

In Rome the perfumery and the *lenocinium* were one, and all the Delicatæ smelled pleasantly, the sloe-eyed *varraganas* of mediæval Spain, too, and those persons of the Renaissance who would bring blushes to the cheeks of our grandmothers. What names the names of scents recall, to be sure: Aspasia, Agnes Sorrel, Diane de Poitiers, Catherine de Medici and her two hundred girls, Gabrielle d'Estrées, Mary of Scotland, Christina of Sweden, Montespan, the Duchesse de Berri, Claudine du Tencin, the Pompadour, Dubarry's Parc aux Cerfs and the immortal Ninon, whom three generations of Sévignes loved—worshippers of Venus Castinia, their very names are the names of essences.

Aye, and since "essence" is, in its first and real signification, "a being, a quality," it might plausibly be argued that the soul has odour, seeks its likeness in the essences of commerce; that we reveal ourselves in our perfume-preferences. What essence, then, was affected by Thargelia, the Milesian fellow-traveler of Xerxes on his invasion of Greece, when the Great King sent her as his Peace Commissioner to Thessaly and she married the Thessalian monarch? What perfume flowed from thrifty Phryne's limbs when Hyperides, the master of her girl, Bacchis, stripped her in her own defense before the relenting gaze of the usually severe Areopagus? How spake the soul of Leaena, mistress of Harmodius, who bit off her tongue rather than betray her friends? How Gnathena and her successor Gnathenion, and Lais, the Sicilian slave, when she scorned the two thousand dollars of

Demosthenes for the ungilded affection of unwashed Diogenes? The Empress Theodora must have had her especial perfume in the circus and retained it on the throne; hers, too, golden-tressed Tullia D'Aragona, who evaded the yellow-veil prescribed for her sisters by Cosimo, Duke of Florence—hers Imperia, called by a Sixteenth Century Pope “*noblissimum Romae Scortum*”—and hers Veronica Franco, Venetian friend to Tintoret (two scudi, the “*négociation entière*”), who wrote books and gave one to Montaigne. Of most of them the recipes are lost, but not of all: in his “*La Divorce Satyrique*,” Henry IV. complains that his frail Queen Marguerite anointed herself nightly with jasmine-oil; la Vallière used “*Fleurs de Cypre*” and its hair-powder of impregnated lichens—their secrets must have been familiar to Restif de la Bretonne’s *jolie parfum-euse*.

Into good Society, at any rate, essences came, and, come, they have scandalously remained. Don’t our Prohibitors know why? “*Suas habeant Romanae lascivias*,” wrote Bossus Platus; “*purpurissa, ac cerussa ora perungant, formenta libidum, et corruptae mentis indicia*”—Lucian cried out, “What use are ointments?” And Burton echoed Lucian: “Why do they use those sweet perfumes? . . . Why do they adorn themselves with so many sweet smells? . . . Why do they crown themselves with odours, flowers, whatsoever Africa, Asia, America, sea, land, art or industry can afford?”

“They” were ladies. It is the male bird that fine feathers make; among the lower mammals it is the male that secretes the protreptical odours. Nor, among the males of our own genus, was it only an Alcibiades or a Cataline that used scents, not alone Commodus and Elegabolus and Nero. There were Alexander the Great and Richard Wagner. Men used the perfumed baths of the Orient and Rome; Juvenile declares that “almost no man came abroad but curled and anointed,” and Horace that “one spent as much as two funerals at

once with perfumed hair—*et rosa canos odorati capillos Assyriaque nardo.*” Gallant Baraud, almoner of Francis I., became even a distiller of essences at the end of his other essays in distillation: Brantôme says so. Macaulay’s Sergeant Obadiah of Ireton’s Regiment rails with historical accuracy against his enemies’ “perfumed satin clothes” and is true to fact when he says of Naseby:

“*The Man of Blood was there with his long essenced hair*”:

Charles didn’t forget his toilet when he went to battle. In French, *parfum* is a masculine word, and the English Galsworthy refers respectfully to something like “a fine, old-fashioned love for perfumes”—is it in “A Man Of Property” or “The Country House”? It is in one of the novels that were so much better than the novels he is writing now. Men did use odorments; but, save in barber shops, they are now deemed feminine; and women (one repeats the query) use and have used them—why?

“Anoint thee,” Naomi counselled Ruth, sending her to the conquest of Boaz. Judith “anointed herself with precious ointment” when she went to Holofernes—and you know what happened to him! Plutarch is authority for the fact that Antony “was quite besotted with Cleopatra’s philtres,” and Petrarch relates of the hardy Charlemagne that:

“He foolishly doted on a woman of mean favour and condition, many years together, wholly delighting in her company, to the grief and indignation of his friends, and followers: when she was dead, he did embrace her corpse, as Apollo did the bay-tree . . . and caused her coffin, richly embalmed and decked with jewels, to be carried about with him, over which he still lamented.”

What had enchanted him? The woman’s perfume: when they destroyed that, they ended his infatuation. Philocharus, in Aristenactus, cautions Poliaemus that “the smell of her ointments” gives his mistress her power over him. “They use those sweet perfumes” to ensnare us, and we—Antony

and Charlemagne, you and I—we are ensnared. . . .

## X.

BUT I must not be late at Daphne's! They were terrible things, perfumes.

I almost saluted bronze General Sherman as I crossed before him at the Plaza. East Fifty-ninth street was hardier than ever, and France must be very far away. The scents that I used to know there, and one of them—

Daphne never used perfume of any sort. . . .

## XI.

I HAVE drunk that syrup of jasmine wherein a renegade Turk can find intoxication; I have known Molehwa, the scented tea of China; at Dai Nga we used to like the scented native liquor. Once, over her aromatic coffee in the Kashba of Algiers, five hundred feet above the blue water, an unveiled Moorish woman told me:

"It smells so good, this coffee, because there is ambrette in it. It smells like musk. All the Arabs use it, but the best comes from Martinique, which is America."

These things I have known—and many more, alas! none the odor of sanctity—but nowhere essences so mettlesome as in that fractional world of Paris that was before the War. There was the Paradise of Perfume, an Occidental "Scented Garden" in the City of Lights. How was it ancient Vulpone courted Coelia in the old comedy?—

"Their bath shall be the juice of gilliflowers,  
Spirit of roses and of violets,  
The milk of unicorns."

It was thus the women of that vanished sphere wooed its visitors.

A girl's first thousand francs (five francs to the dollar, then!) went to a perfumer that he might concoct a new scent for her alone. He would study her—her looks, clothes, speech, her tastes and temperament—and express

them in bottled odors beautifully named. There was sandalwood from Malabar for swarthy Désirée Bourdillat, and bergamot from Reggio for Omphale Corhaux; tragic Thérèse Thibaut, who knifed Paul Saint-Sarm, used "Extrait de la Folie," and languid Nanette Nicard "Herbes de la Perse." Julie Laboge and her "Rouges-Deux," Sophie Duchamps' "Draps de Pourpre," Fanchon Collet's "Lit Bleu," Dorothée Roullet's "A Trois Heures"—"Lis Ardents" burned upon burning Manon Damourette, and the ambiguous Jeanne Giraud had her own "Fleurs des Vieilles."

Oh, one remembers them!

And, oh, how one it is always impossible to forget! . . .

The one that somebody I know could not banish, he never knew the name of; he knew only the name of her particular perfume: it was "Rose de Nuit."

"Rose de Nuit"! The night bloomed, the low stars flowered. He was very poor in those days, so he gave her only a poem. I wonder how it would sound in English:

Dear little rose of yesternight,  
Dear little rose with dewdrops bright;  
Kissing your painted petals pale,  
I am your one-night nightingale!  
What does it matter, since all dreams fail?  
What does it matter, if no man knows?  
"Where," you will sigh, "is my night-  
ingale?"—  
*Where is my rose—my rose?*

He was very young.

Life was a whirlpool: they touched and were forever separated. . . .

## XII.

BUT I was to dine with Daphne: "A woman smells best when she has no perfume at all."

I would be romantic—in the American sense. I would renew my Daphne-yesterdays. To my lips sprang, full-born like Pallas from the brow of Jove, my speech of restoration, ancient vows of fidelity, assurances of the loyal future. New York was not changed, nor I. . . .

Nor was there any change in Daphne's flat. The vast window-seat, the grand-piano curiously flanked by one of those machines which scratch musical noises from whirling disks, the Haig etchings, the twenty-four books about seven arts, the tea-wagon that used not always to haul orange-Peekoe (*Trois fuit for it!*)—all these stretched out hands that overflowed a welcome-home.

And, most of all, as she came toward me, *her* hands, Daphne's, and all of Daphne's self. The room-wide windows were behind her; I couldn't see

her face, but her friendly palms my palms affirmed—

And then, a sweet, faint perfume came from her palms—a perfume subtle, moving; from her that had never used any perfume, a perfume that I had never known any save one to use. . . .

"Why," said Daphne: "I picked it up in a store in Seattle. Don't you like it?"

It was "Rose de Nuit"!

I did not dine with Daphne.  
New York has changed. . . .  
I may go back to France.



## Atthan Dances

By George Sterling

*THE silver of the lyre  
Cries, and thy silver feet  
Like living flowers repeat  
Thy body's silver fire.*

*What scents without a name  
Within thy tresses hide?  
What perfect roses died  
To give thy mouth its flame?*

*Thy hands, uplifting, float  
More delicate than Love's.  
Thy breasts are two white doves  
Whose moan is in thy throat.*

*As lyre and cithern swoon,  
Thou lingerest, in thy pace  
The panther's gift of grace,  
Who glides below the moon.*

*Oh, linger where I sigh  
Above the golden wine,  
And touch thy mouth to mine—  
A scarlet butterfly.*



# The Bequest

*By Paul Tanaquil*

**F**EELING he was near unto death, a certain man called unto his bedside his children.

To his stepdaughter he said:

"My daughter, I have nothing to say to you: before your eyes you have the excellent example of two women, my first wife and your mother. Neither of them you knew well enough not to respect; so keep ever before your eyes the shining example of their sainted lives and you will be happy."

To his stepson, he said:

"Oh, my beloved son, always do your duty upon earth. May you ever be free from the sins of the flesh and the ills of the soul. Be always continent and full of righteousness; fear Sin and avoid temptation, so that happiness may always go beside you."

Then, when he was alone with his own son, he said:

"To you, flesh of my flesh, it is given to hear from my own lips counsels that are the fruit of my life. Men will speak to you of godliness and righteousness, they will urge you to live according to rules which they have formulated for their own expediency. Turn a deaf ear to their preaching. After threescore years and ten of living in the fulness of my age, I entreat you to live obedient to your own instinct. Eat, drink, love and be merry; everything save these is an idle dream, an unsubstantial shadow."

Then, feeling he had done his duty, he composed his body and soul for death.



# The Mendicant

*By Rodney Terriss*

**T**HE Earth is a mendicant, cupping her big gnarled hands, begging, incessantly,—"Drop me a star, O Lord,—a star—a star!"



# A Freewoman

*By Helen Woljeska*

ELSA was packing her husband's trunk. He intended leaving for California the next morning. To all appearances it was a business trip. But she knew that he was following the woman he loved. She knew he had been battling against this love for months, and now, since Dorothy had gone, he realized the uselessness of the battle. He gave up, he followed her, and a divorce would, no doubt, be quietly arranged before long.

Elsa had divined all this. Still she did not cry. She felt neither despair nor resentment. These emotions she had gone through when she first realized what was taking place. She had known days of revolution and nights of agony; she had cried out against the cruelty of Fate, the weakness of man. But after awhile the passion of her grief had worn itself out, and in its stead a great bitterness had filled her heart.

She suddenly became stingingly critical, surveying her threatened "happiness" from every angle, scrutinizing it as it had been day by day, and, with eyes cleared from sentimental mists, recognizing all its flaws, the innumerable little compromises, which tenderness only could have forgiven, the frequent petty humiliations, which love only could have borne. She saw with distressing clearness how fundamentally different their tastes were in big and little things, how constantly she had allowed him to substitute his will for hers.

Why? What for? Since evidently they were not congenial, what remained? Only love. And that love, how it had deteriorated since their first

intoxicating weeks of ten years ago. How tame and colorless it had grown. Was it worth sacrificing all one's individuality for? She became able to frankly answer, No. With that realization the bitterness too had vanished. And when the last blow fell, and he told her that he would leave for California, it no longer had power to hurt. She was able to pack his trunk without resentment and without despair.

A bit melancholy she felt, on folding his intimate, well-known possessions, and carefully putting them in place for the last time; melancholy at the thought that nothing human can last, no matter how beautiful, how strong and sincere it may once have been. But underneath this gentle mourning, there was a feeling of almost exultation that their companionship which once had been beautiful but was so no longer, should now be discontinued altogether—and leave her free! Free to be herself in biggest and littlest things—free to follow the high-road of life to who can tell what wonderful experiences!

What a relief it would be, no longer to feel cramped by another's personality, no longer to be harnessed to another's daily routine. It almost seemed to her that Henry's schedule had been especially objectionable, year in, year out: breakfast at eight, luncheon at twelve-thirty, dinner at seven—pot-roast and dumplings every Wednesday (a dish she absurdly loathed), fish on Friday, chicken on Sunday—once a week to the theater (always a girl-and-music show, when she would have preferred the Provincetown Players) four weeks each summer in the mountains (when all her longings were for the ocean)!

Always she had to be acquiescing, obeying, fawning, in servile monotony. What right has one human being to impose his tastes and ideas on another?

Of course, Henry had not actually tyrannized her. She herself had willingly given in, to please him, because she wanted him to be peaceful and happy, because she loved him . . . and he loved her. Oh love! Magic web that covers harsh facts with glittering make-believe. But now he had torn this enchanting web, and she saw the bare ugliness of the facts it had hidden—and she rejoiced in her escape! She was through with slavish concessions, with pretendings, dissimulations, lies, to please another. She would start on the wonderful adventure of becoming acquainted with herself, her true self, her real likes and dislikes, her characteristic virtues and sins. She would be a Freewoman, whose own will is her only law!

The longer she thought the matter over, the clearer it became to Elsa that she really had always been a Freewoman. A Freewoman in bonds . . . for love only has power to hold such a proud being in bondage. And perhaps it was not wholly ignoble to sacrifice one's individual freedom for the beloved. But now all this was a thing of the past. She did not love her husband any more. His infatuation with another woman had completely disillusioned her, and without illusion, love is impossible. There was no longer any obstacle between her and liberty.

Not that Elsa had any illusions about liberty. . . . She had brains enough to realize what a hard, vigilant taskmaster it is, how it must be won by bitter exertion, deep introspection, subtle selection of essentials, the most ruthless determination to articulate, to live, the essence one has discovered to be oneself. No wonder so few people are personalities, are truly human. It is so much simpler to jog along easily on the road of least resistance, to submit to the general trend without struggle, to allow habits, comfort, laziness, cowardice, to hold one down, to be nothing but

a reaction to other peoples' lack of ideas, to say and do what is generally expected, what thousands have done and said before one on similar occasions! After all—only slaves tolerate fitters. Freedom is always in reach of him who will take the trouble to grasp it. But it cannot be bestowed from without, like a diploma or patent; it must be won from within—and she felt the power to win it.

Elsa was still busy with packing when her husband came home. Struck with her calm composure, he wondered if possibly she had not realized what was going on all these months? And an immense relief surged through him. What luck! What scenes of confession and reconciliation were mercifully spared him! For he had come home to make an end to the discord within him, to tell Elsa that he had conquered himself—that he would remain true to her.

"Sweet little girl," he said, beaming with gratitude over the re-stabilization of his whole world, "how neatly she's packing. And all for nothing. The trip's off. The business has been settled by wire. No need of my going to the Coast. I'll stay home with my little wife."

Elsa's hands fell to her sides. She stared at her husband openmouthed, unbelieving.

"You're not going . . ." she stammered.

Her whole castle of brilliant possibilities instantly crumbled to ashes, and the old happiness, too, was in ruins unredeemable, for she knew that she no longer loved Henry. Where should she turn? What hold on to? How could she live? Disconsolate, she hid her face in her hands and burst into tears.

"Darling—what is the matter?" asked her husband in dismay.

"I'm—I'm—so happy . . ." she faltered.

And her subconscious mind, racing along well-known tracks, made a hurried, emphatic note, not to forget ordering the pot-roast for to-morrow night.

# Minnie

*By Edwin H. Blanchard*

## I

MINNIE closed the book with a sigh; it had been the sort of book in which you wanted to go on and on. She would never forget how it ended: the shy little factory girl looking up into Aubrey Bonsall's face and asking, "But how can you, with your social position, love a poor girl like me?" Then Aubrey Bonsall—Minnie turned again to the last page of the book: "A look of ineffable tenderness came into the eyes of the young man. 'Clarice,' he murmured, 'love transcends all such artificial barriers.' He took her into his arms and their lips met and clung."

Minnie sighed, and laid the book on the table. She leaned back in the chair and closed her eyes. Instantly Aubrey Bonsall came up before her, tenderness in his eyes; she saw his thin aristocratic nose and the gray of his temples. "Minnie," he seemed to be murmuring, "love transcends all such artificial barriers."

"Minnie! Minnie!" Her name was being called sharply from the kitchen. "Come and set the table."

"Ma," Minnie was asking a minute later as she reached for a pile of dinner plates, "what does transcends mean?"

"How should I know?" her mother answered impatiently, stirring a dish on the stove. "I suppose it's somethin' you got out of one of those books you always got your nose in."

## II

MINNIE had seen the stranger standing by the entrance to the New Era Hotel as she passed on the other side of the street. He was standing there

smoking a cigarette, clearly waiting for something to turn up. Minnie walked down as far as the Grand View Hand Laundry, crossed the street, and turned back to the hotel. She walked slowly, doubtful whether she dared to do what she had in mind.

As she came nearer the hotel, she drew her handkerchief from her pocket and held it loosely in her hand. When she had gone a few feet beyond the hotel entrance, she let her hand open slowly. She walked on a few yards, stopped with a soft cry of surprise, and turned back. The man standing by the hotel entrance had picked up the handkerchief, and was coming forward to meet her.

"This yours, sister?"

"Oh, thank you! I guess—I must of dropped it."

"Yeah, I guess so. Kinda careless with your property, aren't you?"

Minnie took the handkerchief from the outstretched hand, and made a dab at her nose. He was a classy looking fellow, with his derby tilted rakishly to the left, and his face all smooth and red with shaving. Not any high school kid either. Probably a drummer. Minnie made as if to leave. If he spoke . . .

"Aw, say, what's the big idea?" he protested. "Why rush off just when I've saved your hanky from sudden death. Stick around."

"I gotta go."

"I wisht I'd kept your hanky for a souvenir now."

"I like your nerve!"

"I like it myself, sister." He laughed, showing even, white teeth. He was a classy looking fellow, all right.

"Well, I gotta go," Minnie repeated.

"What, and spoil my whole day?"

His face took on an expression of mock woe. Minnie couldn't help laughing at him.

"Yeah, most likely."

"Cross my heart! Hope to die!"

"Yeah."

He came closer. Minnie noticed faint circles under his eyes. Umm, he must be dissipated.

"What d'yuh say we step down the line and get a little ice-cream soda or somep'n?" His hand was at her elbow in persuasion.

"Oh, I dunno."

"Yeah, come on."

"Oh, I dunno."

"Why not?"

"Well—"

They started off toward the drug store. Just before they got to it, they passed a girl in Minnie's class in high school. As greetings passed between them, Minnie saw a little light of envy and wonder in the other girl's eyes. Everyone in school would know tomorrow that Minnie Holmes had been walking down Water street with a classy looking fellow. They went into Binn's drug store, passed through to the back of the store and sat down at one of the glass-topped tables there.

"The sky's the limit," he announced gaily.

He leaned across the table and in a more confidential tone asked:

"Listen, sister, what do they call you when it's time for breakfast?"

"I'd hate to tell yuh," she giggled.

"No kiddin'. What's your name?"

"What's yours?"

"Bill Wolf, the demon salesman, that's me. And you?"

"Maud Brown's my name," she lied glibly.

"You really live in this dead burg?"

"Yeah, dead is right."

"Well, what d'yuh say we step out and paint this little burg pink tonight?"

She toyed with her ice-cream soda without answering; he repeated the question. Minnie shook her head. He

suggested an evening at the movies, but Minnie demurred again.

"Well, if you don't want to do that," Wolf persisted, "let's us take a little trolley ride and get some fresh air."

"I can't, honest," answered Minnie. "I gotta get home. I'll get the dickens now for bein' late. Lookit, it's half-past four."

Wolf walked as far as the corner of Elm street with her; that was as far as Minnie would let him come. They made a tentative date for eight that evening, but Minnie knew that she wouldn't keep it. Something frightened her—she didn't know exactly what. She wished that she dared tell Wolf that she would go to the movies with him, but she couldn't bring herself to do it. As they left each other, she warned him that she might not be able to get out that evening, and asked him to write her, care of general delivery.

At home her mother was starting to get an early supper, and said nothing to Minnie about being late. But at the supper table, she noticed an air of suppressed amusement in her brother Donald, two years older than herself, and suspected that he had seen her with Wolf. She decided to tell her own version of the story before he had a chance to tell his.

"Wasn't it funny, ma," she began, casually, "a man asked me how to get to Binn's drug store this afternoon just as I was goin' there myself? And so, of course, I walked down there with him, and showed him where it was. There wasn't anything out of the way about that, was there, ma?"

"No," her mother answered, her mind clearly elsewhere. She turned again to her husband, and they went on discussing some minor neighborhood affairs. Minnie stole a glance at her brother; he seemed somehow discomfited.

After helping dry the dishes, Minnie got one of her books from her school bag, and sat down near the light to study. But none of the pages turned. All that she could think of was the conversation of the afternoon, and it irked her now to remember all the opportuni-

ties that she had lost for repartee. She had been silly to refuse to go to the movies with him.

She heard the clock strike eight. He was waiting now, perhaps taking out his watch and looking at it. It gave Minnie an odd and pleasant sensation to sit and think of the fun that she could have had with Wolf that evening, the things she could have said. But she didn't know; she had run away like a silly kid. Nine o'clock. It was no use trying to study. Minnie put her book back in the bag, and went to bed. She lay there, cuddled up, hugging the coverings to her slim body a long time before she went to sleep. In the darkness, she saw Wolf, his features softened, bending over and talking to her earnestly; and she was saying things that made him laugh, and call her, "you delightful child."

A week later she called at the post-office and asked for mail in Maud Brown's name. There was a post-card from Wolf, postmarked at a small city a hundred miles away. All that it had as message was: "Good luck, kid. See you later. Bill Wolf." She called several times after that, but there was never any more mail.

### III

It was the night of the Junior Dance. Minnie had been over at the hall all afternoon, helping to decorate it with crêpe paper and ferns and potted flowers; she had a genuine knack for decoration, and had been made a member of the committee for that reason.

She was going with Vincent Clough. She hadn't wanted to go with him, but he had been the first one to ask her, and Minnie hadn't known how to refuse him. He was tall, and played on the football team; but his face was square and dull, and whenever he was embarrassed or confused, he laughed so loudly as to attract attention. The doorbell rang while Minnie was still dressing, and she heard Vince's voice, strangely modulated as he talked to her mother.

"Minnie! Minnie!" her mother called up the stairs. "You most ready?"

"Yeah! Be down in a jiffy!" She took a last look at herself in the smoky mirror of her dresser, and puffed out her hair with deft touches of her hands. A few seconds later she was holding out her light coat to Vince to hold for her.

"It's a nice night for it, isn't it?"

"Yeah. Gee, you're all dolled up tonight, aren't you?"

"No, just an old dress. Well, good night, ma. Don't sit up for me."

The dance was a lot of fun at first. There were eight pieces of music and the floor was smooth. The boys were subdued by the vision of six patronesses, sitting with hands folded in ample laps at one end of the hall. But at intermission, after everything had gone so quietly, Minnie and Vince and two other couples took their ice-cream and cake and sat in the balcony, and Tom Sullivan teased her about Vince, and Vince laughed and squirmed around uneasily. When Vince finished his ice-cream, he put his plate on the floor, and then put his arm around the back of the settee, so that his coat sleeve brushed the nape of her neck. She shrank away slightly from this contact. A few minutes later the music began again, and they all went downstairs.

Everyone grew boisterous toward the end of the dance. The boys started to pull down the long streamers of crêpe paper that hung from one girder to another; Vince caught up a handful of the tangled paper and wound it around Minnie's arm. Giggling, she tried to tear it off. The orchestra swung into "Home, Sweet Home." Vince held his head close to hers, and whispered, "Baby doll!"

When they were home, and standing in the shadow of the trellis on the front porch, he put his arm around her clumsily, and tried to pull her over. She pushed him off, and he laughed, a dull, pointless laugh; suddenly he caught her arms, pinioned them to her sides, and kissed her awkwardly on the lips.

"Quit it!" cried Minnie. "Let me go!"

"Aw, come," he was saying. "What's

the use of gettin' sore? Why can't you be a sport?"

Minnie stood uncertain, her hand on the door. Vince loomed up before her a blacker bulk in the darkness of the porch.

"Well, good night, Vince."

"What's the rush?"

"It's awful late. Good night."

"Well, good night then." He came forward out of the shadow, and Minnie retreated, opening the door behind her.

"No, don't, Vince. Somebody'll hear you. Shhh!"

"You might give a fella a real good night," he grumbled.

She closed the door softly against him, and went upstairs. She took off her dress and hung it carefully in the closet. She hated Vincent Clough. He had spoiled the whole party for her. She could feel Vince's hands seizing her roughly, and then that wet, clumsy kiss. He was a clumsy fool, she told herself as she was dropping off to sleep, and she'd hate him as long as he lived.

Several weeks later Vince asked her to go to another high school dance. She refused him, and a second time, later on the same year, she did the same thing. After that, he didn't ask her again.

#### IV

RAY JACKSON came to Holton during Minnie's last year in high school. He sat next to her in Senior French, and one day when Miss Munson wasn't looking Minnie wrote out the French of several sentences they were supposed to write on the blackboard, and passed them to Ray.

After that, it was an almost daily occurrence. He was slow in his studies, but Minnie liked his thin face, his wavy hair, his frost blue eyes, and the slow way of smiling that he had. He used to walk home from school with Minnie sometimes, and she learned that his father was the new agent at the cotton mill. Minnie learned too that they kept three servants, and had an automobile, and a cottage at the beach. She liked to hear him tell of his home life; he

never boasted, but there was a certain quiet assurance about him that attracted her. He asked her to go out riding with him twice before she would consent; finally, on the pretext of doing some extra school work at the library, she got away from home, and Ray drove her out in the country. She enjoyed sitting in the seat beside him, face whipped pink by the wind, his eyes eagerly on the road ahead. When they were several miles out of town, Ray drove off to one side of the road, shut off the engine, and pulled a package of cigarettes from his pocket. They sat in silence for some time.

"You ought not to smoke cigarettes, Ray," she ventured.

"Why not?"

"They're bad for you."

"That's silly. You talk just like my mother."

There was silence again.

Somehow Minnie had expected that Ray would put his arms around her, or try to kiss her. She hoped he would; then as suddenly was glad that he hadn't.

After he had finished his cigarette, he turned the car around, and drove home. He dropped her a few doors away from her house with a brief good night.

After that first time, Minnie went out riding with Ray two or three times a week, even after it began to grow colder. The third or fourth time that they went out, he put his arm along the back of the seat, close to her shoulder, and drove with one hand on the wheel. This frightened her, but she liked the touch of his rough tweed coat against her shoulder. Then when he had turned the car out in the side road, he put his arm around her again, and kissed her. She gave herself up wholly to his kisses. He held her closer, and suddenly she became afraid. She was trembling all over. She pushed him off suddenly.

"Please, Ray," she said tremulously. "Please don't kiss me any more."

"What's the matter, Minnie?" His voice was low, solicitous.

"Oh, I—I don't know. I just don't want you to, please."

They drove home without saying anything more.

It was nearly two weeks before she went out with Ray again. It was a sharply cool night, late in the fall, and Ray, with his chin down in the collar of his turtle neck sweater, drove in silence. Not till they got beyond the Bond Brook bridge, three miles out, did he break silence.

"Great night, isn't it?"

His voice was the voice of the first rides together, crisp and friendly, quite as if he were talking to a pal. Minnie felt, somehow, that she wanted more than friendship. Driven by she knew not what, she moved close to him, and put her hand on the inside of his arm. She twisted the fabric of the sweater between her fingers. Ray shoved on the emergency and came to a grinding stop.

"What's the matter?" he asked; she was looking up at him, her face soft and luminous in the semi-darkness. He stooped to kiss her, but as he moved, she buried her face on his shoulder and began to cry softly.

"Good night!" he exclaimed. "You're the darndest girl I ever saw! What are you crying about anyway?"

"I don't know."

Her voice came strangely muffled. She had no idea what made her cry. It had just been—oh, she didn't know. She was foolish, she told herself, a little fool. She moved away from his shoulder and dabbed at her eyes with a handkerchief. They came home as silently as they had gone out.

During that winter—her last in school—Minnie began to take more interest in her work than ever before. Occasionally she helped Ray with his French, and twice he walked part way home with her. As the first dances of the winter came, Minnie hoped that Ray would ask her to go, but instead he went with Irene Carter, a girl whose parents were well-to-do.

Sometimes she asked herself why she should think of Ray at all. She could never bring him to her home; she would be ashamed to. Her home, she told herself bitterly, was what held her back.

She was as good looking as the other girls, and danced as well and knew as much, but—she was a carpenter's daughter. She began to shrink from several of her father's habits. After supper, when he had filled his pipe, he would take off his coat, and sit in his shirt sleeves and slippers, his feet on an old kitchen chair. Minnie would hold her breath, and she could hear the heavy, regular breathing; it held a certain fascination for her, repellent and disgusting. At half-past nine or so, her father would yawn and stretch his arms and say, "Well, I'm going to bed. You folks can sit up all night if you want to." In all the years that she could remember, he had hardly once varied this formula. Then another noisy yawn, and she would hear his steps ascending the stairs, slowly, regularly.

If she could only get away from her home for a year or two. Several times she hinted at college; she knew that her father could afford to send her if he wanted to. But both her father and mother laughed at the suggestion. A college education was wasted on a girl.

Her father pinched her cheek as if she were a child, and said:

"I got to struggle hard enough to keep a roof over our head without throwing money away on a fancy education. What's got into you anyways?" He peered at her quizzically. "You want to be one of them old maid teachers?"

That was it. Her father and mother expected her to marry, now that she was getting out of high school. She wanted to be ready, first, for something better. She wanted soft clothes, and furs, and a car, and a little white house with green blinds—not the dumb, tiresome round of days that had been her mother's. It wasn't Ray, she told herself repeatedly. But after she had played and had fun for a few years, she wanted to be able to have the things that she had wanted all her life. Things like the Jacksons had.

In the spring Ray started taking her out to ride again. He told her one night that he was going to college in the fall.

"You'll forget all about me then, Ray," she said. They were driving out over the old road, and his eyes were on the little lane of light before the car. "Won't you?" she insisted.

"Why should I?" he protested. Minnie found something hollow in the ring of his words. "What do you always have to be looking ahead and imagining things for?"

He was right; she was always being frightened by ghosts, she told herself. When he left her that night, he seemed to have forgotten it. He promised to come for her the next night.

But it was more than a week before she saw him again. He explained that he had been away with his father, unexpectedly. His father, it seemed, had been transferred to another mill that belonged to the same company, at South Orney, way down in the southwestern part of the State. They were going to move over right off, Ray told her. He wasn't even going to finish out the year at the high school, he added, as he had credits enough for college already.

"You seem to be tickled to death to get out of Holton," she commented. It was hard for her to keep her voice steady.

"Oh, it's going to be great down there," he answered impulsively; a second later he seemed to sense her meaning, and added, "In a way, of course, I hate to leave this town. And you know why."

He smiled significantly at her.

"Mmm—maybe," she taunted him. "I wonder?"

"Oh, Minnie, you know I do." He went on to talk enthusiastically of the house they were going to have in South Orney, the deep lawn, the big old-fashioned garden, the huge rooms. Minnie listened mechanically; all that she could think of was that Ray was glad to leave Holton.

The night before he left, he came around to say good-bye, and they went out together in the car. It was a soft May night, filled with warm spring scents, and they drove slowly, the engine purring softly. Ray was chattering

again of the house, and of the pleasures of South Orney. Minnie had a sudden intuition that she would never see Ray again; that this was their last night together. It was another ghost, she tried to tell herself; she tried to force herself to listen to him. ". . . won't be there much while I'm away at school," he was saying, "but it'll be great for vacations."

They were home.

"I'll write you just as soon as I get settled there," he was promising, leaning over her to open the car door. She got out slowly, clinging to the car door still. Ray was leaning forward, his eyes alight with enthusiasm, still talking about South Orney.

"Ray," she interrupted him, "kiss me good-bye, will you?"

He leaned down and kissed her lightly on the lips.

She turned and walked up the path to the house. She made no answer to his "good-bye," flung after her. As she passed the hydrangea bush, she plucked a handful of the blossoms, and tore them angrily to pieces.

Her eyes were blinding with hot tears.

## V

ABOUT a week after Ray left, a postcard, with a hasty scrawl written across, came for Minnie, and she wrote a short letter in answer. It was terribly hard to write: all that you wrote was cold and formal, or else it sounded maudlin. Minnie finally wrote him several pages of inane school gossip. Letters passed between them frequently until late in June, when Ray wrote that he was going to the seashore with his people. There was a longer interval between his letters after that, and in spite of his apologies, Minnie felt that the death of the correspondence was not far off.

When she had been graduated from high school in June, she had decided to wait a month or two before going to work. She wanted, most of all, to postpone the necessity for coming to a decision. Something might turn up, she told herself almost feverishly.

A dozen ideas came to her, and were rejected. She thought idly of teaching country school, but the prospect of disciplining twenty or thirty unruly children was unpleasant to her. Little hints that her mother dropped about the necessity for getting to work soon irritated her. Vaguely her plan took shape; she would go to Boston. Her pride would not let her go to work in Fowler's Dry Goods Store in Holton, but she could go to Boston. She had heard that the large stores took girls without any previous experience. Girls often worked up to be buyers, with large salaries, and trips to Europe every year. She began to read the want-ad sections of the Boston Sunday papers. Then, without speaking to her mother about it, she wrote to several of the stores.

To her surprise, when she broached the idea to her mother the day after she had written, her mother approved of it. Travel was broadening, she thought.

"There's your aunt in Boston, too, Minnie," she added, "you could stay with her a spell. It ain't as if you was going among strangers."

Within a week, a letter came from Backman's, one of the large stores in Boston, saying, more or less non-committally, that they were always glad to get young girls to train.

Minnie made up her mind to go. She wrote to Ray, telling him that she was leaving Holton, and giving him the address of her aunt in Boston. It had been some time since she had heard from him, but she hoped that this news would bring a letter from him. It was the last week in July before she started for Boston, and no answer came from Ray before she left.

Her first week in Boston was one of unalloyed sensation; Minnie made no effort to relate things, one to another. It was enough to be one in the ebb and flow of the streets, and to hear the noises and cries of the city, and to see the magnificent shop windows. In the store there was this same eternal movement and action, to fascinate her and to confuse her, at first. She found a

friend her first day in the store in McClehan, the floorman in the waist department, to which she had been assigned. A man old enough to be her father, he had looked at her smilingly and, after a moment's inspection, he asked her, "You're from the country, aren't you?"

"Yes," she answered, "I'm a little rube. But don't you give me away."

McClehan watched over her after that, and warned her of various tricks that the old girls would play on a new one. A notorious customer who always managed to get the salesgirl into trouble was passed on to the unsuspecting Minnie when she had been in the store scarcely three weeks. After a trying half hour, the customer departed with vague threats of reporting Minnie to the office. Minnie went back to the stock room and had a good cry. This was the only untoward incident of her first month. She watched the other girls, and learned quickly. She made friends with the customers by her natural deference and shyness.

Once, when she was out at lunch with McClehan, she told him of her desire to get transferred to the notions department. She had an idea, she told him, that she would be more successful selling to men. The transfer went through, and Minnie discovered that she had been right in her intuition. It was easier to sell to men. Either they knew exactly what they wanted, and you sold it to them without any fuss; or else they were ready to be persuaded that they wanted anything that you had in stock. When she saw McClehan for a few minutes now and then, she tried to explain her theory of salesmanship to him. It was hard to put into words.

"You have to—have to carry on sort of a long-distance flirtation with every man customer," she explained. "A smile will go a long way."

McClehan seemed amused.

"Underneath the fluff, you're a cool one, aren't you?" he commented. "Cold heart, clear mind, hey?"

After he had left her she wondered: was she really getting cold and hard?

She had come out of that rosy haze she had been living in for so long; she was beginning to see clearly before her the vision of accomplishment. She had a cold, steady flame of desire now, desire of success. It was necessary to use people, rather than to be used by them. Already her schooldays seemed strangely remote, and the girl who had dreamed through them almost a stranger. The letters that came to her from her father and mother came as echoes out of another time: little items of gossip, querulously set down. Three of Minnie's classmates, her mother wrote, were to be married, and between the lines Minnie thought she could see the question: Why wasn't she thinking of getting married?

A boy in the credit department of the store had taken her out several times, once or twice to dinner or to the movies, and once to a crowded dance hall. Minnie tolerated him for the sake of the glimpses she caught through his acute eyes and his slangy speech of the wisdom of the city; she disliked his shallow sophistication, and compared it unfavorably with Ray Jackson's calm certainty; but she needed to learn things, she told herself vaguely, and to take her teachers where she could find them.

In December a letter came in the rough, groping handwriting of her father. Her mother was sick in bed, it said; couldn't Minnie manage to come down for a week or so, until her mother was better? Stella was trying to do the housework, but she was only fourteen, and had to keep up her work at school. The appeal of the letter angered Minnie. Her father could get a hired girl to do the work; it was just that he was too close to do it. She wrote back, telling her father it would be impossible for her to leave without giving up her job and spoiling all her chances. In a week a letter came from her mother telling Minnie that she was better, but still weak. There seemed to be an undertone of patient complaint in the letter, as if Minnie had wronged them somehow by her refusal to come.

Her mother's letters came less often after that, and were filled more and

more with complaints about her health. Minnie had left her aunt and taken a room with another girl who worked at Backman's; she groped almost instinctively toward a complete independence. But one night in April, when she came home late from the store, there was a yellow envelope stuck in the side of her mirror.

She opened it and read: "Your mother has had a stroke. Come home at once. Father."

As she held the yellow slip of paper taut, there came to her, fantastically, the image of her mother's mother, a broken old woman, dead only a few years since; she had been bedridden for years. Strokes or something of that sort ran in her mother's family. Her mother wasn't an old woman either. She started to put a few things in her bag. The image of her grandmother came up before her eyes again, the thin, pinched face, with snapping black eyes against a parchment skin, propped up in bed by three or four pillows, a stick in her hand to tap on the floor with; the memory of that dreadful tapping on the floor had hung over Minnie's childhood. And now . . .

## VI

MINNIE had been so busy that she had not once stopped to look closely at her father; as she sat there, it suddenly came over her how changed he was—even in the last year. His complacency had vanished; in its place was an air of defeat. He looked tired this evening; she noticed, as if for the first time, the sagging lines of his face, the shadow of weariness in his eyes, the droop in his shoulders. He depended on her so completely. She knew suddenly that she was not going back to Boston. This old man in his weakness and weariness and defeat bound her more completely than any oath she could have taken. Her mother would never be able to do more than the light work around the house now; Stella was growing up, but for a year or so the burden would be hers. Her father was reading the paper, and

looked up at her over the rims of his spectacles.

"Kind of cozy here, in a home of your own, now ain't it?" he asked. "Now own up, don't this beat Boston?"

There was an unconcealed fear in his eyes; he didn't want her to go back.

"Father," she said, "I'm not going back to Boston. I—"

Her voice died out in her throat.

Her father rattled his paper, yawned, and looked up at the clock.

"Well," he said at last, "I'm goin' to bed. You can sit up all night if you want to."

There was a plaintive jocularity in his voice, the voice of a man who had been frightened and then reassured.

Minnie sat for a time in the sitting-room; she heard her father's steps mounting the stairs, two dull thuds as he threw his shoes on the floor, a far-away murmur like the sea a long way off as a few sentences passed between him and her mother. Then there was only the ticking of the clock on the mantel, slowly, inexorably checking off the seconds of her life, weaving around and over her the web that was to keep her forever from the life she had glimpsed fleetingly in the city.

## VII

SHE had heard her father mention Vince Clough's name two or three times since she had come back home; she gathered from his talk that Vince was in the real estate business.

"He may not be much to look at," her father had said, "but he saws wood."

Vince was making good; his solidity was carrying him past other men more intelligent or with better opportunities. He would be persistent, she thought.

She was in front of Caswell's grocery store, picking over some green stuff exposed for sale there, when she felt a touch on her arm. She turned quickly. It was Vince, square and solid as ever, his face more florid, his figure heavier.

"'Lo, Min," he said, extending a

square, thick hand. "Haven't seen you since you got back. How's your mother gettin' on?"

"She's lots better, Vince. You—you look prosperous."

"I can't complain, Min. I suppose you'll be goin' back to Boston now?"

"No—no. I don't think so."

He came closer. He was so curious, so sober. The old boisterous air had gone, and there was an uncanny solemn dignity, a heaviness of manner about him. He was trying to frame a question.

"Why not—lissen—Min—s'pose I drop out to the house some time, what?"

"Sure. I'd be glad to have you."

"Some night this week, hey?"

"Yes, any night. I'm always at home."

"A home-body, hey?"

"Yes, I have to be."

Vincent started coming out to the house. He seemed strangely mature to Minnie, as if he were forty instead of in his middle twenties. He moved slowly and ponderously already, had the manner of a man settled in life. Occasionally they went to the movies and sat side by side in silence. More often they sat at home, while Vince went over with painstaking detail the transactions of the day at the real estate office.

Minnie found herself surprised by his literal-mindedness, by his directness of purpose. He was fond of saying that when he wanted a thing hard enough, he went out and got it. It was true, she felt more and more. His solidity, his phlegm, his invulnerability to discouragement, were irresistible. He was the sort of man who got things out of life, who accumulated property. While men laughed at him for perceiving things dully and slowly, he would be moving toward them with a ponderous and terrible certainty; and the very narrowness of his vision would make the final victory all the more inevitable. Sometimes she felt herself thus placed on his path, before the sweep of his stubborn will; she was being driven slowly

into a corner whence there was no escape except surrender to the hulking figure that came on slowly but irresistibly.

It was in the silences between them, when his dull eyes were fixed on her so knowingly that she saw coming up before her the necessity for making a decision. It could not be postponed much longer. Vincent had been coming regularly for months. There was no other man. If he stopped coming, there lay before her an endless stretch of days filled with the routine of the housework, and the hundred and one demands of her mother. It was better to take Vince, and have a home of her own. Sometimes she rebelled against her bitterness, telling herself that it was because she had again slipped into the dreams of her childhood. A clear vision, that looked on realities, would tell her that Vince would be kind to her, would look after her comfort; he would be a good provider.

When the time came, she had a last faint moment of panic. He was unusually solemn, and he had brushed his suit carefully and put on a new tie. They were sitting side by side in the couch hammock.

"Lissen, Minnie," he began, "I've got somethin' to ask you."

"Oh, really!" Her laugh was a shade hysterical. "Now what d'you know about that? Got something to say to me!"

"No. No kiddin', Minnie, I mean somethin' serious."

He ran his finger around the inside of his collar as if it were interfering with his breath; there was a mute reproach in his eye. Minnie suddenly felt ashamed of herself. This great slow-moving man was in agony on her account, and she could sit there in a timid panicky spirit; there must be ice in her heart. Poor Vince!

"It's this way, Minnie," he continued, his eyes resting on her, "I'm doing pretty well, and I'm tired of living alone. And I bet you are, too. I don't mean it that way. . . . It's just—can't you and I just hitch up? We'd get along together, Minnie? Don't you think so, Minnie?"

He was plucking timidly at her sleeve; his eyes were pathetically eager.

"Yes, I think we would, Vince," she heard herself saying; her own voice came as from a long way off to her ears. Then Vince's arm went around her, and he kissed her moistly on the cheek. She buried her head on his shoulder, and began to cry softly. She saw before her a long road, that turned neither to right nor to left.

"Good Lord!" declared Vince, moving away from her slightly to look down at her. "You sure take it funny. Just like a woman!"

"You—you don't understand," said Minnie softly. "It's just because I'm happy, and—and—I don't know what."



*To succeed with men, be bold. To succeed with women, be bolder.*



# Her First Hallelujah

By Marion Strobel

I

**H**E was glad that he had been called Ethan. It was a pretty name. And it sounded different. It went with what he sometimes called his "laughter-loving soul," and at other times "his gentle melancholy." Which was to say that it was comprehensive. And just romantic enough. An oasis between the unimaginative Johns and Henrys, and the too idyllic Archibalds and Percivals. He was, of course, sorry that his last name was Brown.

Still, now, as he signed the letter, he consoled himself with the thought that, the next time he wrote to her, he would omit it. Yes, surely, the next time he wrote he would omit the Brown, and Ethan would stand alone and provocative.

He re-read what he had written slowly. Re-reading was a pleasure to him. It always filled him with a faint sense of surprise that he, who a few years ago had left Quincy, Illinois, could now not only manage the accounts for the large Stockbridge Bond House of Chicago, but could, moreover, manage his romances with a firm delicacy. The successful handling of his emotional life was even a greater pride to him than the neatness and accuracy of his accounts, for in a mysterious way it established him, made him belong. Success in emotional intrigue was to Ethan Brown an accolade bestowed by the city upon a favorite neophyte.

"Dear Ann"—his letter began conventionally. He liked beginning things conventionally. A convention was, to him, a necessary and pleasant pause—a doormat marked "welcome."

DEAR ANN:

Monday.

We had so little time yesterday. There were so many people. And seeing you was such a surprise—I didn't even know you were in the city.

Will you have lunch with me on Friday? I will call for you at one o'clock.

Very sincerely,

Ethan Brown.

Her reply came the next day in the noon mail. The office boy brought it to his desk with the remark, "Two letters for you, Mr. Brown."

He had read the one from his mother first. And then:

DEAR ETHAN:

I'd love to have luncheon with you on Friday. Supposing I meet you at one at the Tip Top Inn? Perhaps you will bring some poems—I should love to see some.

Sincerely,

Ann Tennant.

He smiled at the letter. And at the repetition of the word "love." Even as a little girl she had been so prodigal with her enthusiasms. He remembered their last meeting. It was after they had graduated from the Quincy high-school—he had written the class poem, and she the class history. The poem had been a little too replete with keys of gold and silver unlocking doors to Success and Fame. And all he could remember now of the class history was her sketch of him—it looked like Rupert Brooke—and underneath it the words: "Music I heard with you was more than music." The class had thought that the quotation was, in some obscure way, a jibe at his preferring Chopin waltzes to "I'm Your Jazz Baby" rags. But he knew that she had

written the quotation in all sincerity: that music she heard with him was, to her, in reality, more than music.

He remembered that they had come out of the schoolhouse into a dazzling sunshine. And that, as he walked along with her, the air shimmered in the stillness of the June heat. The day, somehow, emphasized his peace of mind. He felt that he had accomplished something, and that he was on the point of accomplishing much more. He had confided in her this feeling; he had said:

"I want to write poetry, and maybe plays. I want to be something in a literary way. Of course there's no money in it. And at first I'll just have to earn my living, and write in the evenings. But I'm never going to give up writing. You see, Ann, I think I have some talent—and that's what I want to do."

"Yes, I see," she had answered gravely, and then:

"Oh, Ethan, I do want you to succeed. I want you to write something beautiful."

They had proceeded in silence until they reached the lane with the maple trees, and then, quite simply and sincerely, he had kissed her.

"Good-bye, my dear," he had said. And her face had changed suddenly—had become white, frightened. It was as though the word "good-bye" had de-vitalized her. She looked tired—tired—and her hands, in the one slight gesture they made, supplicated him so... Her voice was harsh in its intensity:

"I love you, I love you."

She had not touched him. If she had, it would have been easier to forget. . . . Instead, she turned and walked away—the white youthfulness of her commencement dress contrasted oddly with the slowness of her progress.

He had written her quite regularly at first. A long letter, in fact, when one of the obscure magazines of the radical variety had printed one of his poems: "They didn't pay me—but, of course,

the publicity helps." She had answered: "You have made me happy—happy!"

He couldn't remember why he had stopped writing. Whether it had been his quasi-entanglement with pretty Peggy Kelly, who had the piquant distinction of perfectly proportioned shoulders, or whether it was that his attitude toward money had radically changed.

Money, in fact, no longer seemed sordid and ugly. It was, indeed, very tangibly beautiful. And much more positively beautiful than the abstract contemplation of writing. But she wouldn't have understood that. . . And, anyway, they had both been children on that June commencement. Perhaps, since then, she had grown fat or married. . .

He had regretted losing the snapshot he had of her—had spent an entire morning looking through his desk and bureau drawers. He was really fond of the picture. . . It was so characteristic of her to be standing against the wind, her hands full of flowers, an exalted defiance in her attitude. Long after he had forgotten her features, he could still remember the spirit of the picture—her uncompromising scorn of the wind.

Once, over a year ago, and four years after he had seen her, he had come across a Quincy newspaper with her name in it. But the notice had been unsatisfactory: "Mrs. John Aikman will give a small luncheon for Miss Ann Tennant, on Tuesday, before Miss Tennant's departure."

He had scarcely thought of her since then. And on Sunday, at Peggy Kelly's studio tea, he had at first not noticed her. Which was natural enough, as he was embarrassed and self-conscious. He had not been to one of Peggy's studio teas for so long. Not since the afternoon that Peggy had asked, "Is it to be the peroxide blonde, or me?"

He had not liked the question, nor did he like Peggy in yellow, with jet ear-rings—the blonde, though stupid, was

beautiful. . . So he had stayed away from the studio teas for many months. And, indeed, had he not heard that an illiterate musician was writing her a scherzo, it is doubtful whether he would ever have seen Peggy Kelly again. The scherzo, in some way, revived his interest.

On Sunday, therefore, he had stopped in at the studio. It was just as it used to be—a crowded room, shrill voices, cigarette smoke, and Peggy sitting in her accustomed place behind the tea-table, pouring orange pekoe into bright orange and blue cups. She had greeted him enthusiastically:

"My dear, come here at once. Tell me this mandarin coat makes me look heathen and enchanting."

He had, of course, told her so. And much more before he was finally allowed to drift away. It was then, just as he was thinking Peggy rather an amusing child, that he had turned and seen Ann Tennant.

She was leaning forward talking to some men, and her eagerness, her vitality came—as it had always come—as a shock: it was so much more palpable than any of her more tangible characteristics. He wondered how he could have forgotten her. How he could have forgotten the way she had of listening with her lips parted, her eyes bright—she was always so intense in her silences. And, then, the restlessness of her hands. . .

He had spoken to her—he couldn't remember what he had said: he couldn't remember because at his calling her "Ann" she had looked up, her face white, frightened, just as it had been on the day that he had kissed her good-bye. And her voice, as she answered his questions, was low and unsteady. She told him that she was studying at the Art Institute; that she did commercial drawing on the side—to pay her rent; that she hadn't been back to Quincy for over a year—not since her parents had died. Then, abruptly, she had risen, said she had forgotten a book, and gone.

He had got her address from one of the art students.

## II

"You know, Ethan, when I first came here, I thought I'd meet you—oh, almost any day. I used to think I saw you in crowds." She smiled at him across the luncheon table.

Yes, she was prettier—or, rather, her charm had increased. And she was thinner. She looked, in fact, very frail, very slight. He had forgotten how small she was. He had never thought of her as small—she was too eager for that. It was as though she were always standing on tip-toe reaching up with her hands. And just as there was something big in her littleness, so also there was a vividness about her white skin, and grey eyes: a vividness that, when she smiled, was warmly dazzling.

He liked the simplicity of her black satin hat and tan suit.

"And then I became discouraged," she continued, "and reconciled—it's such a big city. I didn't look for you even in crowds. I suppose that's why I acted as I did at the tea. I couldn't quite believe it was you."

She was serious now—looking at him searchingly. It was as though she tried to grasp how he had changed, and at the same time to push it aside.

Her scrutiny made him feel uncomfortable.

"You were all right at tea, Ann," he said awkwardly, "only I wasn't sure whether you were glad to see me."

"Oh, Ethan!" The exclamation answered him completely. It revealed so much—wanted to reveal so much, was so generous.

Finally she spoke of his writing. He knew she would sooner or later. And he had intended to be honest with her. He had intended to say that he didn't have time for writing, and that he wanted to make money. Did she know that making money was really not a degraded thing to be doing? Why, you could do so much good with money! Yes, he had intended to say that. But now, somehow, it seemed impossible—just as impossible as it was to think of

her as an intrigue. The moment he met her he had given up his tentative, sentimental plans. He liked her so much! And it seemed so unkind to tell her the truth.

"Of course, Ann, I still want to write," he said slowly, stirring his coffee and not looking at her. "But I'm discouraged. I get so little time, and then when I send them something that I know is good they send it back with something about 'this does not quite meet with our requirements'—"

"Yes, I know—"

"So I haven't anything to show you now. I haven't done anything lately." Well, that, at least, was true. And it was true, in a way, that he still wanted to write—that is, he would want to if he had more time. A fellow couldn't work all day and night, too.

"Some day I wish you'd send me something you've written," she leaned forward, one hand resting on the table. She had a look of added eagerness: "I do so want to see something you've written. And, perhaps, I could think of some way to get it printed." She looked speculatively out of the window. The Art Institute was opposite.

"The Happy Hunting Ground," she mused, changing the subject, "where we all gallop after beauty. I love it over there. And that reminds me that an Ethiopian model is posing as Cleopatra and I've got to go."

He left her at the corner of Michigan Avenue and Adams Street. The last thing she said was:

"You know, Ethan, I'm an awful failure as an artist. Oh, I'll always be able to draw organdy dresses and the latest hats from Paul Poiret. I don't mind so much. I mean I don't mind the fact that I'll never be a second Franz Hals—I love him so! But I will mind if you give up writing. You see, you happen to be—" she paused as if searching for words, and then:

"My first Hallelujah!" she ended and smiled.

The sun was on her upturned face. She looked very young.

### III

A WEEK later he sent her a poem. He had not written it himself. He had found it in an old magazine and had liked it. So he copied it and sent it to her. He had no intention of deceiving her. Indeed, he never considered the fact that she would suppose he was the author—he had, so long ago, ceased thinking of himself as a poet. He simply knew she would like the poem, and sending her something eased his conscience for renewing his acquaintance with Peggy Kelly. And, also, it was spring.

So he sent her the poem and he didn't remember until after he had mailed it that he had omitted the author's name. Well, he would explain it to her when he saw her.

### IV

UNFORTUNATELY, on the next day, Peggy took up what she termed her "kill or cure" policy.

He had come down to the office early, and had just hung up his hat and coat and washed his hands. He always washed his hands before work—he thought it fitting. And, too, he liked smoothing his hair before the rectangular mirror that hung above the basin: his reflection was always satisfying. Particularly so now, with his spring suit—he favored dark blue, dark blue with a black tie. It was suitable and becoming—the black tie emphasized the darkness of his hair and eyes. He was, in fact, considering the advisability of wearing a black tie exclusively when Peggy telephoned.

"Hello you," came her familiar drawl from the other end of the line, "do you mind dining with me on an average of once a day for the next week? Come up to the studio tonight. I've got sparkling Burgundy and Russian cigarettes, and I'll wear black and we'll mourn together over our love that died in adolescence. And, Ethan—I've had it bobbed and a permanent. It makes me

feel light-headed and look like a 'Tease Me!'"

And so on. Peggy was intensive—even in her conversation. He went, of course, to the studio and they resurrected their love—as was natural and seasonable. They, in fact, loved very charmingly through the month of May.

Once, when Peggy mentioned Ann Tennant—"that white-faced artist, you know"—he felt a twinge of conscience, and asked:

"What's happened to her?"

"Oh, nothing. She's gone back to Quincy. It's funny the way these little artists bob up and then disappear. Of course, Ann could never have made good. Not enough talent, poor dear, and no tact—always wanted to know a man's intentions. Oh, you sweet old thing, supposing I'd asked you your intentions! Intentions are so crude, aren't they? And facts so whimsical." And she stroked his hand as she was wont to do.

"Do you know, my dearest," she continued, "Ann Tennant made me quite furiously jealous. You remember my studio tea? The first one you came to after—well, after I wore the yellow dress? You talked to Ann for minutes and minutes—yes, really!"

"Did I?"

"It was clever of you."

"It is clever of you, my dear Peggy, to mention it."

. . . Oh, yes, they loved charmingly through the month of May.

And it was still May when Ann's letter came.

DEAR ETHAN:

Why didn't you tell me the poem had been printed? I took it to an editor—a friend of mine—and he said he remembered it very well, but had forgotten that you were the author.

It was lovely, Ethan—lovely!

*Ann.*

He answered her at once:

DEAR ANN:

Tuesday.

It was so stupid of me! I omitted the name of the author. I intended telling you when I saw you, and then you left town. And, too, I never dreamed that you would have supposed I had written it. You see, my dear, unless an enthusiastic person like yourself reawakens my interest, I never think of writing anymore.

You will forgive my stupidity? And I'm sorry you went to so much trouble.

Let me know if you come to town again.

Always,  
*Ethan.*

He reread the letter slowly. He hoped she would not be disappointed. After all, he could have lied; he could have said he had written the poem. . . . She would never have known. . . Under the circumstances it was rather decent of him to tell the truth. . .

He was pleased with his honesty and with his signature. He was glad that he had been called Ethan.

  
TO acknowledge to a beautiful woman that she is clever and charming; to appear anaesthetic to that charm; that is the suavest punishment that can be inflicted by man.



# The Helpful Device

By George Sinberg

BEFORE his marriage he was a liberal, good-hearted fellow, free with advice and cash to all who asked of him. Besides, he was president of numerous charitable committees and contributed freely to one-cent coffee stands, funds for free lodging-houses, homes of all kinds, and hospitals. In politics he labored mightily on behalf of the masses against the oppressing dominant party organization. He even won a minor office on a reform ticket. Contrary to general practice, he strove to carry out his campaign pledges. It was through his efforts that the poor of his district enjoyed free ferry-rides on municipal ferry-boats that year. He paid his state and federal taxes to the penny due, hiring no accountants to show him how to cut his tax in two. In short, he was an excellent citizen.

Now, after his marriage, he has dropped his membership on charity-

committees, for his wife requires a good deal of attention. He has cut down severely his contributions to charities for he now has a family to support. He sits up nights figuring how to bluff on his income-tax, for he is ashamed to let his wife be seen in public wearing last year's furs. In politics he has gradually slid over to the organization; he knows what juicy plums are to be plucked by the faithful and for the sake of his family he must seize all that are offered him. He has become stingy with business advice and asks for so high a rate of interest on loans that people have stopped coming to him for them. How it will affect the interests of his wife and children is his sole test for any contemplated act. In brief, he is a model husband.

He is also noted for the vigor with which he argues that marriage is a device to help the state.



*INNOCENCE is like a Tam O' Shanter. It looks well on a girl of twenty, but incongruous on a woman of thirty.*



*LOVE is an architect. Marriage, a firm of house-wreckers.*



# Dancing Days

*By Amanda Benjamin Hall*

## I

**D**O you know Mrs. Marsden, Mrs. Blanche Marsden, indigenous of the hotel that calls itself The Esplanade and houses more upper-class divorcées, more birds-on-the-branch than any other roof-tree in New York? It would seem that they are like starlings; once a starling lights on a bough, immediately the tree is full of them. Like all exiles they are bold and buccaneering and — lonesome. You must have seen Mrs. Marsden dancing at the tea-hour and remarked to your companion.

"Look at that woman! She's as graceful as a girl of twenty, but it beats all how that kind will 'carry on'."

She will be wearing the most gallant coat of paint, a frivolous hat and a gown that is fashionable without being really fresh. It stands by her at the tea-hour but admits its wear at ten A.M. Mrs. Marsden likewise admits her wear at ten in the morning. Her nerves are strong and she can endure to stand grimly before her mirror, not the most tactful mirror in the world, by the way, and examine her gaunt face with its sagging muscles and its cat's-paws of wrinkles. She can even look at herself before the curlers have been removed, provided she has had her cup of coffee first.

Her suite consists of two rooms, she is careful to tell everyone, but she does not always add that one is the bathroom. After Mrs. Marsden is "really up," the bed takes on a disguise, all the toilette articles of the dressing table are thrust into disrepute and cheerful

magazines appear, together with ash trays and kewpies with tarlton skirts. And as the walls are peopled with likenesses of Mrs. Marsden's friends there is a feeling of constant company.

She has lived at The Esplanade for years now, ever since "it" happened. Were she domestic she might be more comfortable in a less expensive apartment house, but she has no notion of cooking or the feminine arts and she craves the populous confusion of a hotel. The very odour of it, that expensive, stagnant one of thick carpets, cigarette smoke and cut flowers is dear to her nostrils. She loves the sound of the elevator all day humming like an ambitious bee seeking an outlet through the roof. She loves the strange faces, continually changing, the ceremony of meals, the flattery of service. But most of all she loves the sensation of being a free-lance.

On a certain afternoon, she had her hat on when Dick arrived. (It was quite as likely to have been Bertie or Ned or Tom, but it happened to be Dick.) Her brownish-gold hair, liberally streaked with gray, was fluffed out beneath a little hat that made her look nearly sweet. It was one of her sweet moments. The grimness of ten A.M., the obsession of loneliness, the fear of old age were gone. She was on the verge of being happy and Dick found her in a mellow, an almost material, mood, if Mrs. Marsden could ever be said to experience one. It was the privilege of her years to kiss him at the door, but she put the light interpretation upon it by saying crisply, "Nice boy to take old

lady dancing!" And Dick rose to the fly with, "You old? Never!"

All the time she was mixing him a cocktail in the bathroom he heard her singing; when she emerged she took a few syncopated steps, the silver shaker in her hands going up and down, her eyes fox-trotting. The glasses were ready and she bade him.

"Here, laddie, tuck this away. The music's already begun and I don't mean to lose a minute of it!"

When the prelude was over and they had descended to the palm garden, rather dimly and confidentially lighted, Mrs. Marsden was already mildly exhilarated. But nothing save music could really intoxicate her.

After a perfunctory order for tea, the curiously assorted pair arose, the youth, Dick Hodges, blond and spare with an extraordinarily nice profile and tiny, faint freckles as a souvenir of childhood, and Mrs. Marsden, supple in her slinky black silk tricot trimmed with monkey fur. There was nothing of the lounge-lizard in Dick; he liked to dance as he liked to play tennis, for the sheer fun of the thing, and he had a Quixotic notion that Mrs. Marsden was a martyred soul. As they maneuvered out to the dance floor between the little tables a woman with a long, slab face and eyes as green and shallow as a river with a sandy bottom informed her companion.

"There's that Mrs. Marsden one sees about so much. She always has a youngster in tow. You'd think she would have reached the age of discretion. Disgusting dilettante!"

"But she seems to have a good time," the man mused charitably. "I mean an honest good time, not just pretense. Well, you've got to admit she's a dream on the floor."

"That's just it," quickened his companion with acerbity, since she herself had lost the secret of how it was done. "It's all she knows—how to have a good time."

"But that's not dilettanteism," the man objected more strongly, "that's genius!"

The green-eyed lady nibbled her toast, angry out of all proportion.

"She was married to a very nice man but they couldn't get along. Her chief charge against him was that he wanted to retire at nine-thirty."

"Ah," observed her companion with an omniscient gleam, but said no more; and the lady returned to her toast with a sense of defeat.

Meanwhile Mrs. Marsden and her partner, the blond young Dick, were by their performance conspicuously inconspicuous. They never cheapened their dancing by too obvious figures; if the boy was a model of grace, Mrs. Marsden equalled him for sheer symmetry and poise. Their steps flowed in subtle communion, they varied their program with humorous jazz innovations, but so adroitly, so unconsciously, that the eye was enchanted. Their dancing was quiet and brimmed with potentialities, their faces reflected secret radiance. Theirs was a genius of invention, a freshness of technique. And when the number ended and they came back to their table they glowed with self-applause, as it were, of their own performance.

As the excitement gradually eased a diminutive bell-hop, bursting with buttons and importance, zigzagged through, calling in his cheerful boy's soprano,

"Mrs. Marsden, Mrs. Marsden."

Mrs. Marsden lost her nonsense, caught the boy's eye and brought him to her with a crook of her finger. Her face showed a faint annoyance.

"Whoever it is, I won't leave," she promised Dick in an aside, but it was as though she promised not Dick but herself.

The boy came rosily.

"Daughter to see you, Mrs. Marsden!"

If the heavens had fallen and meteors had appeared among the tea-cups the poor lady of the dancing feet could not have looked more undone. As for young Hodges, he felt unaccountably sheepish. He had heard of the daughter, of course, just as he'd heard of the North Pole, but one didn't expect to reckon

with the North Pole between such corking fox-trôts as these. It was fabulous anyhow; you had only to take one look at Mrs. Marsden to recognize that. Her smiles had disappeared, but the lines about her mouth stayed without excuse. He did not know why he felt sorry for her but he did. Gosh, he felt sorry! She reached over and touched his hands with hers, the gesture something between a plea for pity and an apology.

"You know, Dick," she said, "I have a daughter. I don't talk about her much because I haven't been allowed to have her for years. She's still in boarding school and in summer her father always takes her abroad. When the bust-up came in our family Mr. Marsden didn't think me capable of bringing Genevieve up and I had to agree with him. Oh, he was quite right," as young Hodges opened his mouth for a perfunctory protest. "You see, Dick, I wasn't old enough for the responsibility—I'll never be old enough."

She looked at him oddly, almost as though she looked through him. "Heaven knows how she came here. What shall I do now?"

"I'd suggest," said the boy soberly, "that you go out and bring her in."

"Would you? But perhaps this isn't the sort of thing her father—I mean the sort of atmosphere she ought to breathe? I don't know, Dick. I've lost perspective."

"Anyhow you can't keep the poor kid waiting."

"No, I suppose not."

She rose carefully, one might have said feebly, the expression of childish dread still in her eyes.

"You wait, Dick," she begged, pressing him back to his seat as she brushed by. "You wait. . . ."

## II

HER heart was beating absurdly as she passed down the long corridor into the foyer of the hotel. It was six months since she had even *seen* Genevieve; it was years since she had *known* her, and her awe of the young girl was so great

that her faculties seemed strained to the breaking point.

Why had she come and what was her attitude toward the mother so confessedly incompetent? Had George Marsden sent her? Ah, there she was! A slender girl, alarmingly pretty. She sat on the edge of a velvet chair, her waiting eyes veiled by reserve, her well-shod feet crossed before her.

Like a young queen, she sat, a condescending young queen who would hold the reins of government firmly, but be kind to her loyal subjects. That was what George had made of her, a shining aristocrat who would sing, dance, converse and be charming with all her wits about her, her safeguard of position. She was dressed with charming simplicity; she looked unsullied and a trifle inaccessible. Suddenly Mrs. Marsden was aware of her own facile conformity to fashion, her rouge and her pernicious cocktail. Her graceful carriage lost its confidence. She approached Genevieve with humility.

"My dear," she welcomed her with both hands extended, and as the young girl rose quickly she kissed her timidly on either cheek. "This is a surprise, Genevieve. When did you come? Are you alone? And why was I not notified?"

Genevieve flushed sensitively.

"I came down from school, Mother, and I did send a telegram but it must have been delayed. Father came up to see me over the last week-end and I told him how fed-up on school I've been getting. I told him I wanted to be with you for a change and he said I was old enough to make my own decisions. Of course I'm eighteen!" She thrust forth the information with a little jut of the chin.

Her mother smiled slightly, then quickly withdrew her smile before Genevieve's resentful dignity.

"Oh," said Mrs. Marsden tremulously, "so you will have a little holiday with me, dear, and then go back to school. That will be delightful!"

Genevieve lowered her disconcerting, bright gaze and stubbed at the rug.

"I don't think you understand, exactly, Mother. I'm—I'm here for good. Father is fair enough to see that I've had all these years with him and now—now it might be better if you took me for a time, provided, that is, you care to have me."

"Oh, Genevieve," breathed Mrs. Marsden faintly.

But Genevieve went on in a matter-of-fact tone,

"Other girls of my age have their mothers to chaperone them and I think it isn't quite proper that I should never have mine. I explained that all to Father."

Mrs. Marsden held her trembling lip with her teeth, the ironical words ringing through her brain: "their mothers as chaperones."

She roused herself bravely.

"You say you explained it all to your father. And what did he say to that?"

"Oh, he said," puzzled Genevieve, "that it all depended on whether you were old enough. And I'm sure I don't know what he meant by that. You—"

"To be sure," finished Mrs. Marsden with a fugitive smile, "I look old enough, do I not, dear?"

She took the chair next to Genevieve's almost awkwardly. Could her daughter feel how completely she was at her mercy?

"Of course," she began, touching Genevieve's fingers experimentally, "it is all very sudden, very flattering, your wish to come to me, and I am touched. And we must consider the matter carefully—perhaps this evening. But in the meantime you'll want to go to my room and rest." And then, punctiliously, "I trust that you left your teachers well?"

The question choked her. Why must it be as difficult as this?

"Very well, thanks," answered Genevieve with a little censored yawn. "Miss Kenton's maid was coming to town so she insisted on putting me in her charge. It should have been the other way round."

They talked in this strain for several minutes. Then Mrs. Marsden repeated the suggestion about a rest.

The girl turned her face suddenly upon her mother and the latter noted with a thrill of admiration that it was flawless as a cameo. The lilac-gray eyes had an expression of enkindled desire.

"But I don't need to rest. I rested all the way on the train. And it's not much of a ride and I don't think I'm mussy." And then slyly, "I hear music. What's in there? Are they—dancing?" She dared the word momentously. "And were you looking on?"

The last two words, inflected upward, struck the older woman like a curved blade, and left a stinging wound.

"In there? Oh, yes, I was—looking on . . . I was having a nice boy to tea, Dick—Dick Hodges, his name is."

"A boy," echoed Genevieve, and innocently, "I haven't seen one in months. And his mother?"

"His mother? No, dear, why?"

"Simply that I supposed you and his mother must be friends else—else—"

"Else I wouldn't be apt to know him?" Mrs. Marsden again completed her thought pleasantly. "Of course I know her but she doesn't happen to be here. Come along, then."

Genevieve arose with almost a bound, and taking Mrs. Marsden's arm leaned upon it approvingly.

All the way into the palm room she talked up into her mother's face with dainty effusiveness, and all the way Mrs. Marsden heard the count of her own years behind her. So George, the careful, had entrusted her with this precious porcelain! And in doing so he was not running true to type, which she resented. Yet, paradoxically, she was flattered. How should she act to protect this child and earn her respect? Should she assume the rôle of mentor? Probably in all the world there was no woman less sententious than Mrs. Marsden. She knew not even how to scold herself.

On the other hand, what if she continued in her natural rôle of pleasure-hunter? No, she had seen at first shot in Genevieve's eyes that the monkey fur would have to go, also the small, unholy

hat with the green tomato next to the brim. Neither accessories would the Misses Kenton (of the Kenton School for Young Ladies) have approved of her mother wearing. (Mrs. Marsden remembered dubiously a small shop off the Avenue filled with middle-aged and strong-minded hats.) A young lady so meticulously reared and trained must be suitably parented. But for the moment such problems were dismissed.

Young Hodges got up when the two entered and his whole psychology underwent extraordinary change. Just as Mrs. Marsden had returned from that recess a sobered woman, so Dick had automatically reverted to the correct youth with whom mothers might safely entrust their daughters. He became reverent before innocence and its protectress.

"Genevieve," said Mrs. Marsden simply, "this is Mr. Richard Hodges. Dick, my daughter."

The eyes of the young people met deliriously, then became guarded.

Genevieve put out her hand.

"I'm so glad to know you, Mr. Hodges," she told him with the *savoir faire* of a full-grown baby. "Mother has been telling me about her friendship with your mother."

Dick frowned incomprehendingly before receiving Mrs. Marsden's bland but warning look. He smiled and the freckles danced engagingly.

"Yes, great friends. Old friends," he lied with enthusiasm.

Yet, despite her dissembling, he pushed in Mrs. Marsden's chair deferentially, for was she not the mother of this darling creature whose softness and sweetness were the real thing? Mrs. Marsden out of her experience recognized the change in him. Never again would she have Dick for a comrade and the certainty smote her with sentimental regret. The three leaned over the little table discussing what Genevieve should eat. Cinnamon toast, Mrs. Marsden thought, after the journey. She contrived to look maternal and persuasive. And she added severely that perhaps she ought also to eat a

chicken sandwich. But Genevieve said "No" with a square set of her little chin. She would like French pastry, lots of it, because at school they had never had enough sweets.

"Oh," sympathized her mother, "poor child! Not to have any at all! The system really requires a certain amount of sugar, don't you think, Dick?"

But Dick did not hear, because the music had begun and he was dwelling engrossedly on Genevieve's reaction to it. She was by far the prettiest girl he had ever seen and he recognized that she had been exquisitely trained. It was revealed in the way she handled herself, her grace in sitting or standing, the little air of restraint that seemed to curb a high spirit. Mrs. Marsden (he had been wont to think of her as "Blanche") was a trump and all that, but one could hardly have expected to find her daughter like this. He recalled now the easy camaraderie that had been between them and was unaccountably embarrassed. He and Genevieve looked at one another while the fox-trot invited and—

"Would you care to dance?" he asked. "That is, if your mother doesn't object."

"Oh, do you, Mother?" Genevieve's appeal was almost a challenge. "I should think it was all right with you here to chaperone me."

Mrs. Marsden looked at Dick helplessly.

"Why, why yes," she stammered, "so long as I'm here."

"Thank you, thank you," cried young Hodges devoutly, and led the lovely girl forth to the floor.

Mrs. Marsden stayed numbly over the colony of tea-cups and when the waiter came round she remembered about the French pastry that Genevieve craved.

How strange it was to be sitting like this, *hors de combat*, a wall-flower! She remembered a phrase of her ex-husband's, something about "when your dancing days are done." They would never be done, she now decided hotly; they would all be dancing days until the end, if she could make them so.

As a devotee of the dance it was a peculiar kind of torture for her to watch

dancing, yet she became absorbed in the two upon whom the rays of her interest converged. Although dancing with the tall boy had *felt* delightful she had had no idea of how well he *looked* upon the floor. She was not in love with Dick—that would have been absurd—but she was in love with youth and Dick exemplified it. He had accorded her a charming devotion and been flattered that she found him amusing, she, Blanche Marsden, a woman twenty years his senior.

Now he was holding her daughter in the half circle of his arm, holding her firmly, yet preciously, like something marked perishable. Genevieve's slight figure with its confiding tip-toe poise, its conformity to his, was almost boyish. She held her head back in order that her hat might not brush his brow and Dick looked continuously down and into her animated face. He thought of many pleasant things to say to her. Dick was a dear. . .

Mrs. Marsden woke with a start. Dick in regard to herself and in conjunction with Genevieve were two different persons. For what did she really know of him? She had met him through Fred Gardner and Fred through Larry Marsh. She realized without bitterness that though Dick had not brought his mother to call upon Blanche Marsden he would no doubt bring her to call upon Genevieve Marsden's mother. The half hour had made her wise.

"Oh, Mother"—it was Genevieve come back radiantly—"it's too bad you can't know how wonderful a fox-trot is!"

### III

THAT night a cot was installed in Mrs. Marsden's room for Genevieve, but it was not Genevieve after all who occupied it though she insisted upon doing so. The room would seem stuffy enough at the best to one just down from the country, her mother argued, and mentioned in passing that all floors up to the fifth were in the dirt belt. Above the fifth floor the altitude was unsullied by soot from the street. It all depended on how rich one was. And she was not

surprised when Genevieve broke out obtrusely,

"But now that *I'm* here, Father will want you to have the best."

Mrs. Marsden's face flushed and she lowered her eyes. Certainly George would now make it his business to place them above the dirt belt, which she had whimsically divined. He was more concerned for his daughter's welfare than for his ex-wife's, which was of course natural, since Blanche had chosen her own way rather than substantial support and stagnation. She had been severely censured for her course. It must seem, at a glance, that she had deliberately cut loose from responsibilities and forsaken her daughter; and people who deliberately forsake their children are deserving of small pity. But in reality it was not so simple as that. Few things in life are. Out of the tangle of motives and provocations, the onlooker with a love for pigeonholing makes his choice and says, "This is why she did it—this is the kind of person she must be!"

She had precipitated her own crisis, it is true, but after the provocation of ten years, after all her suppressions had turned malignant. There was nothing, there never had been anything bad about Blanche Marsden, but she had, for a woman, that dangerous attribute, a flair for living. It was a wistful thing at first, a fairy-child's passion for all dew-glittering jewels, a sort of moon-mirth. But George, the heavy, the sedentary, had not understood and so he had actually fought this fragile playfulness, had smashed into it with his fist and thereby perpetrated a ghastly crime. It was like maiming an infant: it grew not quite perfectly. It became one-sided, furtive. With the years Blanche turned desperate, irrational. And when a sickening controversy rose over a really quite innocent escapade, the gipsy woman, with all her gipsy blood rioting, did the silly, tragic, yet comprehensible thing—she ran away from George and refused to return.

And George, playing the injured husband for all it was worth, said that she could never be entrusted to bring up her

child. Then the divorce and the flittering, worthless years which Mrs. Marsden had spent at The Esplanade, always pathetically grasping at straws, warming her cold heart at chance friendships, yet more nearly her original self than she had been as George Marsden's respected and circumscribed wife.

To-night, as Genevieve undressed, Blanche covertly did things to the room, a tacit admission that her standard of life must appear silly to a proud young thing like her daughter who need never pick the second best. She made a harvest of masculine photographs, turned the key to her combination writing desk and cellarette, banished the starry-eyed kewpies, and even took stock of her cosmetics and decided that the field was too large.

When she had finished her anxious censorship she turned to find Genevieve in pink underneaths and lost herself in simple amazement. Was there ever anything so lovely as those arms and shoulders, anything so sweet as the tall column of her throat and all that spraying hair, ruddy-dark as though blood circulated through it?

"Dear Genevieve," she said beneath her breath, smitten by the sudden realization, "to think of all that I have missed of you!"

Her lips quivered idiotically. She yearned to kiss that unspoiled mouth but when she was on the point of doing so she desisted, because of the level look of those violet-gray eyes, so politely impersonal.

After all, how could she expect the child to be responsive? For years she had been living apart from a mother eternally *declassée*. At boarding-school she had suffered from the knowledge that her mother's story was generally known. And coming to her now, as she had, she was simply taking her mother on probation. Then, because she was ashamed and punished, Blanche dropped her face into the folds of spraying hair, the adorable, fragrant hair and kissed it.

"Go to bed, dear," she said lightly, "and to-morrow we can talk. I want to know about your father. Is he well?"

"Quite well, dear Mother," Genevieve answered with sweet patronage. Since meeting young Hodges she had definitely made up her mind to remain. "Daddy's coming to see you, you know. Didn't I mention it?"

Mrs. Marsden had picked up a hair-brush and now held it poised in mid-air.

"You—you didn't tell me," she began almost angrily. "He is coming to stipulate what I may or may not do with you."

She could not keep the bitterness from her voice.

"Oh, not at all," soothed the other gaily. "I suspect he's coming because he wants to see you again. He's a perfect lamb for gentleness—always has been—and I can't imagine what you two found to differ about."

Genevieve had taken the sensible, well-bred tone, thought Mrs. Marsden, and she schooled herself to do the same. Genevieve would never understand and it was all so long ago. . . .

"You're right," she laughed, "he was a lamb. But he never wanted to gambol, my dear. He wanted to be an old sheep even when he was young enough to run and shake his bells. And I—I guess I was a toy lamb with a blue ribbon around my neck. I never could lose my friskiness and the more I understood his hankering after the still pastures the more I—I did not want to grow old."

Thereupon she sighed a little, lifted the brush and gave her hair a vigorous brushing. Genevieve was wisely silent. It was only after her mother had accommodated herself to the eccentricities of the cot that she called in a flute-like voice,

"Oh, Mother, does—does Dick come often and shall we go in for the dancing every day?"

#### IV

It was three months later, and the winter season was nearly over. Blanche Marsden sat in the drawing-room of a five-room suite at The Esplanade, and she was entertaining her ex-husband, George Marsden. Certainly her environ-

ment had changed. Here space was exaggerated, orderliness prevailed, and there was no need for cunning expedients of living. One had a dining-room now and banished was the electric grill from the bathroom. Also one entertained in an opulent cream-colored salon with shrouded lights and a piano. George Marsden was a pink, benign Mephistopheles tempting her back to the paths of affluence and duty.

He sat now in an attitude of habitual well-being and as he was a large man tending to obesity the tranquillizing influence of his presence was colossal. People said of him that he had a good face and a big heart. Blanche had always thought him "wholesome." His face was ruddy and of a square roundness; he had a breezy out-of-door eye, a rather long, vigorous, unconsidered mustache, and an engaging smile. When he laughed his heavy shoulders rose and fell silently and his hands, which were usually clasped over his abdomen, rose and fell likewise. He suggested good meals and a fat worn pocket book. And impeccable morality. What he did not suggest was great sensitiveness, the finer shades of understanding, or any sort of whimsicality.

At the other end of the room, entirely sufficient unto themselves, Genevieve, in a gray chiffon frock, was seated at the piano with young Hodges by her side.

From time to time George Marsden would regard them fondly and twirl his long mustache with an approving thumb and forefinger. But most often he looked at the woman who had been his wife, the moth that had flown away and for seven years had spent her time darting in and out of candle flames. She looked very meek now. You would scarcely have recognized her. She wore a black *crêpe de chine* dress, open at the throat but without ornamentation. And the absence of all the old cheerful make-up made her appear almost delicate.

For three months Blanche had not danced; for three months she had steadily said "Nay" to the old frivolling pleasure-seekers who were wont to telephone between ten and twelve A.M.;

for three months she had been evolving to the new order till the readjustment was nearly perfect.

It had not been an easy thing to do but the presence of Genevieve compensated her for what she had lost. She dared not admit even to herself how passionately absorbed she had become in the girl. Whereas at first she had covered up the traces of her gay life with ironical humor, whereas it had been a rather killing game of make-believe, now she was deadly serious about it. She would have murdered the one to discredit her in her daughter's eyes. And Genevieve, she was almost certain, was fond of her too. Not in like measure, of course, for the race looks forward, never backward.

But Blanche was reasonable in her demands for affection. It was enough to be near the radiant creature without ever touching her at all. To be her slave was more sustaining than anything she had ever known. And so she had chaperoned the young people about and sat obediently over the tea-table while the sweethearts were dancing. And, responsive as she was to the sinuous dance-tunes, she would not even so much as let her foot tap the floor.

It was pleasant to be living a perpetual holiday with her daughter, pleasant to have her expenses looked over in this new, suave way. And twice each month George Marsden had come down from his estate up the river and expounded upon the pleasures of middle-age.

Though she had not seen him for years, Blanche found little change in him. He was only in reality where he had theoretically been ten years ago. He would bring them great boxes of his own hothouse flowers, huge donations of fruit and candy, and they would all go to the theater together and take Dick Hodges with them. The latter had brought his mother to call as Blanche had expected and George had methodically looked up Dick's record.

This particular evening George was more than usually benign, and when he lifted her hand Blanche sensed what

was coming. She even experienced a irresistible pleasure. The renewal of relations made Genevieve so happy. She would have drifted into any uncongenial arrangement, have made any sacrifice for that young goddess.

"Blanche," said Marsden ponderously, "I'm going to ask you a strange question. Perhaps," with sublime egotism, "you won't think you deserve my offer, but we'll not go into that. I've been appreciative of the way you've handled our girl all this winter and I think I may say sincerely that there is a great improvement in you."

Blanche turned her still beautiful eyes upon him in an old, arch way. What would have infuriated her at one time seemed now only an amusing smugness. The fierce fires of youth had spent their heat.

"Yes?" she murmured drolly.

"Yes," said George obviously. "As you know, I don't believe in divorce—its validity, I mean. I should have considered it immoral for me to have married again with you still living. Will you—won't you come back to me and let our family remain intact?"

Accidentally he had chosen the right words to move her, for to Blanche the family meant Genevieve. She was ready to acknowledge now that she had lived a lonely life without her little girl. Her hand rested between his two hands as between two warm cushions and she thought:

"Going back to him would be like taking an anaesthetic—a few long breaths and you're under, and you stay under as long as you live," but even that prospect she could face.

She did not delude herself that George had changed; having lived these years with no opposing spirit he would be more Georgean than ever, more platinous, more crushing and cruel in his cheerful, cushiony way. She had not forgotten, never could forget, his smothering management, his rich unhumorous relatives, his unhappy faculty for being flippant when there were tears in her eyes or censorious when she was laughing, and the gifts which he gave

her and which were always given to himself.

"You would have Genevieve altogether, then," he put in strongly, and she repeated like a lesson:

"I should have Genevieve altogether." But she added with a touch of pathos, "And you would sometimes let me go gipsyng, you would let me dance off surplus energy?"

He compressed his lips.

"My dear, aren't your dancing days about done?" Mrs. Marsden winced but allowed him to go on. "What has this sort of life really given you; what have your dancing friendships been worth?"

She considered them seriously and she could have told him that the divine spark of fellowship had sometimes been in them, that deep in the hearts of her playfellows—those tragic comedians who rode on the crest of the wave—she had often seen God and seldom had she seen God in the self-sufficient George Marsden. But she was beyond argument.

"Oh, come home to little Genevieve and me," he pleaded, "and we'll let bye-gones be bye-gones. We'll be the happiest little family of three in the world, and to hell with the rest. The trouble with you, my dear, is that you're terrified of the shadow of age, even now you're playing off like a skittish horse. I can see it in your eyes. Think of it this way, Blanche—youth is eternally hunting for something which contented middle-age has found. Believe me, settling down isn't bad at all—it's—it's kind of jolly. You look back at all the scrambling others, all in a greedy stew about the pleasure they're afraid they won't get and there you sit all the time with pleasure in your lap. Ho, ho!" he laughed like Santa Claus, "it's all rather jolly!"

Blanche lifted her head and looked at him with new interest. She rather fancied this doctrine because there was an element of humor in it. A slow smile grew in her eyes.

"Why, George," she said, "you do—you do make it sound inviting. But in

order to sit still one has to learn to knit, and I could never do that, George, I could never do that."

She shook her head with an expression of uncertainty in her eyes like a child that fears it cannot conquer a difficult lesson, but is willing to try.

"Pshaw," he said largely and waved his pink hand, "you'll soon learn how. Then it's all decided."

He made an asthmatic sound of emotion.

"When—when will you come back to me, Blanche?"

She looked at him half fearfully, then across the room at Genevieve, whose rusty-brown head was beneath the aureole of a lamp. Still looking at Genevieve she answered:

"Whenever you say, George."

## V

It was later in the evening. The children, as she called Genevieve and Dick, had taken a fancy to accompanying George to the railroad station. George must go home to attend to his usual fussy affairs and would be back in a few days.

Mrs. Marsden had come down in the elevator with them and kissed her ex-husband, her future husband, good-bye. She felt completely reconciled to him and she was deliriously happy in the thought that she had rounded out something for Genevieve; she was going home to be Genevieve's mother, her assured companion for a long time.

The decision once made she was surprised to find what peaceful vistas of the future it opened to her. She would be patient in the reclamation of her child; she would win her irresistibly by an understanding so tender, a companionship so constant, that Genevieve would be compensated for all the years of separation. She was aware of the saying that children judge their parents and rarely do they forgive them, but because she loved she believed in miracles. Her kiss to George had been negligible, but her kiss to Genevieve

when she made the announcement—heaven had gone into that kiss.

When George, complacent in his greatcoat with Genevieve and Dick as left and right bowers had departed she sank pensively into a chair near the door and lapsed into a coma so deep and long that she forgot the skipping, light-footed minutes. She was still sitting so when the young people returned, first Genevieve, then Dick, hurtling through the partitioned door. Genevieve looked fresh as a gardenia but the boy's face was more arrestingly radiant. They spied her immediately and it was a race which could reach her first.

Blanche's mood of mellow maternity seemed to extend to every branch of her consciousness; the beauty of this boy and girl was like perfume—they moved to music. Was it the announcement that she would remarry George Marsden which had made his daughter—her daughter so ecstatic? And did the boy but reflect her thankfulness? But almost at once she saw that it was a very different sort of happiness with which Genevieve was occupied, that she had, in fact, her own tidings.

She flung herself upon her mother and kissed her in little absent, moist caresses.

"Oh, dearest, what do you suppose? Dearest mother, what *do* you suppose? No, Dick, let me tell her."

Mrs. Marsden grew canny. From beneath her decorous veil she screwed up an eye at her daughter, and it was once again the eye of the lone fighter, game yet defensive.

"Is it about your father and me?"

"No—" was the scornful reply, as though parents were relatively unimportant in the large scheme of life, "it's about Dick and me, mother. We're engaged!"

"Engaged?"

Mrs. Marsden's face tied a knot. Genevieve nodded emphatically.

"That is, if you have no objections," deferred Dick softly, just as he had said that first day when he wished to dance with Genevieve.

But Genevieve was tempestuously determined.

"Not only engaged," she insisted shrilly, "but we're going to be married right away. Dick asked father on the way to the train because his company is sending him West and he wants to take me with him and, only think, father was perfectly delighted! He said he believed in young people marrying, that their chances of happiness were better before they became too world-weary and spoiled. And he said rather gleefully that now he would have you all to himself."

The coldness of death was on Mrs. Marsden, yet when she passed her hand across her forehead it was wet. Dick saw and understood and bending over her he kissed her long and tenderly with his boy's fresh lips. Was it possible that he loved her the better of the two, he, this lad with whom she had frivoled and fox-trotted but who now clamored to be her son-in-law?

"Oh, you like me, Mrs. Marsden," he pleaded, nor remembered that he had ever called her "Blanche," "and you know I'm on the square in loving Genevieve. You can't—you can't object—?"

"When it's for my happiness," put in Genevieve without compunction.

"When it's for your happiness," murmured Mrs. Marsden with fumbling lips. "But, dearest, you are so young and I had planned so many lovely years to be together. Surely there is time enough later. You wouldn't go and leave me all alone with your father?"

The hot tears welled in Genevieve's eyes.

"But you—you went away and left me alone with father and—and I was just a child!"

The words had said themselves at last. Mrs. Marsden cowered, cringing, utterly disarmed at the outset. Seeing her so Genevieve could afford to be generous. She adopted a humbler tone.

"Do you suppose I could be happy at home without Dick—now?"

Both faces were turned toward Blanche beseechingly. It was as though the cloud of her opposition had over-

shadowed them, all the joy that had made them so beautiful was obscured. And she suffered keenly from her own denial. She saw the uselessness of fighting, of arguing her case. A stunning kind of hopelessness numbed her.

She tried to pull herself together, to collect the remnants of her dignity for a graceful defeat. But she could not even weep in the facile fashion required of her. Dick, this engaging, this innocent vandal, was stealing her baby, and her baby wanted to be stolen. What could she do, what turn could she give her disappointment? Her look hung upon Genevieve's delicate face as upon a lost paradise.

"Oh, my darlings," she said at last feebly, "you know that I give my blessing. Only, to be told so suddenly and to know that you are going far away—" she smiled fugitively, "it does take a bit of facing."

They kissed her again and, then, with assurances of undying devotion, they played at being loving and grateful children for fully ten minutes before Blanche divined that they were waiting for her to release them.

"Run along," she bade them with a gallant brusqueness, "and leave me to recover." But immediately they had done so, her gleam of playfulness was gone.

A heavy lethargy chained her limbs; her weariness was so great that it was an effort to breathe. The loss was so unlooked for, it had followed so closely upon her foolish dreams of restitution. And what it all amounted to was that she must pay the piper and continue paying the piper till the dance was ended.

People passed and gazed upon her wonderingly, relaxed, almost lifeless as she was in her chair, but she neither heard them nor saw them. Her numbness was transforming itself into a familiar ache, familiar yet magnified out of all proportion to its former self-loneliness. Like one who finds himself with a malignant disease she now found herself ill of this virus, to be consumed by it lingeringly.

"Blanche Marsden!"

She was aroused by a voice of cordial vibrations.

She lifted her head feebly, then with the old instinct for gay appearances she smiled. It was Larry Marsh, a spoiled and genial bachelor, not too young, and a member of the old coterie.

"Why, Blanche," his pleasure inundated her, "I haven't seen you in a dog's age. What have you been doing with yourself?"

"Don't you know, Larry?" she asked wistfully, and when he was seated beside her she put her hand on his arm (it was just anybody's arm) because she was so desperately lonely. "I—I've been living with my daughter. I've been seeing a great deal of my ex-husband."

She had started to tell him that she was going to be married again when she suddenly recollected that the reason for her marriage had been swept away! For Genevieve's sake she would have married George; now she would never marry George. That iron was formed in her soul.

"That so?" remarked Larry sympathetically. "Well, we've missed you and I must say you don't look as if you'd

been having a riotous time of it." He gave her hand a merry squeeze. "Do you hear that music? They're playing 'Caresses.' We are in luck and I've not had a dance with you in months."

Mrs. Marsden strained back to look at him . . . then:

"After all," she thought, "why not?"

Since she had decided against George there was only the other course left to her, the old course. It would be better than to settle back with George as the butt of his nagging to the end of her days. In the morning her friends would call her up and say, "Oh, my dear, come to Delmonico's this afternoon. I've some attractive men for you to meet." And at five o'clock she would find a becoming mood and a good partner and she would dance her *Valse Triste* with brave merriment.

"Come on," cried Larry boyishly, "or we'll miss this dance."

Mrs. Marsden rose slowly, like one who is waking from a long dream and Larry could have sworn that there were tears in her eyes.

"Yes," she laughed, "let us dance. I've almost forgotten how."



## Things

*By Dorothy Dow*

THINGS that are lovely  
Can tear my heart in two—  
Moonlight, on still pools. . . .  
You.

Things that are tender  
Can fill me with delight—  
Old songs, remembered. . . .  
Night.

Things that are lonely  
Can make me catch my breath—  
Hunger for lost arms. . . .  
Death.

# The Legacy

*By John Towner Frederick*

## I

JUDGE GARRISON stopped at the head of the stairway leading to his offices over the Savings Bank, peering down into the semi-darkness between the scarred and placarded brown walls. On the landing half-way to the street entrance a man and woman were standing, the woman with her back to the wall, the man's pudgy figure almost against her. As the judge paused he heard the man's nasal voice uplifted angrily:

"I don't give a damn what the jedge says. I know my rights, an' I ain't agoin' to be cheated out o' 'em."

The voice stopped as Judge Garrison stepped decisively down the stairs.

"See here, Lem Rickert," he began as he neared the landing, "Didn't I make it clear to you that this money is the exclusive property of Mrs. Rickert? I want you to understand that I meant every word I said."

The stout man defiantly opened a gray mouth in the midst of his bunch of brown whiskers, but the judge turned to the old woman, crouched in her full black skirts against the wall, her sharp blue eyes watching him keenly over silver-bowed spectacles.

"You'd better go on down and deposit your money as I suggested, Mrs. Rickert," he added kindly.

"Reckon I will," she mumbled, her toothless mouth pulled into a grin that grotesquely exaggerated the disfigurement of her nut-cracker face.

Her husband started to follow as she shambled down the stairs, her black skirts trailing the dusty steps behind

her, but the judge brought him up with a none too gentle hand.

"I've got a word to say to you, Rickert. And I'll have no back talk!" he added, as the gray mouth with its large brown teeth again came open. "I know how you treat your wife, and so does the rest of the town. You've managed to keep out of reach of the law, but you're meaner than the devil and you know it."

The Judge's voice rose. His large smooth face was red, and he shook Lem Rickert by one thick shoulder.

"If anything happens to this money of hers, now—if you take it to buy any old fool machine—I'll put you through for misappropriation of funds! Do you hear?"

Cowed by the impressive term, as much as by the Judge's manner, Lem Rickert hurried downstairs.

"Damned old skunk!" the Judge muttered as he watched the round form pushing between the doors.

Then he chuckled as he turned back toward the office, totally forgetting the cigar for which he had started to the drugstore.

"Guess maybe that last phrase 'll hold him," he remarked as he climbed the stairs.

Meanwhile in the bank below, Mrs. Rickert faced the patient, bald-headed cashier in the one cage doubtfully. She had a deep mistrust of banks, redoubled by the failure of the local "First National" a year before, and the loss of a few dollars by her son-in-law. She would never have considered leaving her "will-money" here, but for her fear of her husband's acquisitiveness.

She laid one twenty-dollar bill on the marble counter, hesitantly,

"Do you wish to open an account, Mrs. Rickert?" Will Perrin asked pleasantly. He made it his boast that he knew every resident of Douglas Township over ten years of age, by name. But he had never seen "Old Lady Rickert" in the bank before.

"It's the legacy from your aunt in Ohio, I suppose. Judge Garrison told me about it."

"Yes," she answered aimlessly.

She was trying to decide whether to give him the other four bills of the hundred dollars the Judge had paid her.

Perrin was preparing the long slim check book and the small red pass-book. He paused, pencil in air.

"A very good plan, indeed. Did you wish to deposit all of it?"

"No!" The marble counter, the bronzed grill-work, the tiled wall had decided her. Her distrust of the bank had overcome her fear of her husband. "Jes' that, now, I reckon. But say, Mr. Perrin, if he comes a' askin', yuh won't tell him but what I lef' it all, will yuh?"

Will Perrin laughed, a bit crestfallen.

"No, I'll try not to, Mrs. Rickert. But I think you might find it would be safest here."

The old woman did not reply. She glimpsed her husband outside the window and clutching the check and pass-book she shuffled out to meet him.

## II

THEY rode in silence behind the scrawny gray team up the long dusty hill to the edge of the village, where their tall brown house sat under the towering soft maples overlooking miles of valley. The slim black check-book and the little red pass-book with the rounded corners seemed to Mrs. Rickert symbols of a victory over her husband, and she held them proudly in her knotted hands on her thin knees. He watched the wheel dourly, or slashed at the undisturbed team with the blistered black whip.

At the house Old Lady Rickert has-

tended to place the check-book in a prominent place in the sitting room, on the shelf with the three clocks—all of which, of the many in the house, ran. She watched from the kitchen window until her husband led the team into the barn, out of sight. Then she hurried to the cupboard and thrust her remaining bills, twisted into a small wad, and the pass-book, deep into a ten-pound sack of sugar.

She had decided that "he" wouldn't find them there. He sometimes ate lumps of brown sugar, but he wouldn't touch the white unless the brown was all gone. She knew he would search her bureau, her clothing, every kettle place—if, as she feared, he should discover that she had not left all the money at the bank. But surely he would not think of the sugar.

The pork and potatoes for his supper were frying when Old Man Rickert entered the kitchen, but he scowled at his wife as he washed his hands roughly at the basin on a bench in the corner.

"Why ain't supper ready?" he demanded. "Spouse yuh been countin' yer money, huh? Or was yuh fool enough to put it in the bank like Ol' Garreyson told yuh?"

Old Lady Rickert ignored this series of questions. While he glowered at her she slid a plate and a case knife toward him over the checked yellow oilcloth, and followed them with a large dish of fried potatoes, a platter of pork in grease, and a heavy cup of reeking coffee.

"Bet you'll lose ev'ry cent o' it. I'll teach him, orderin' my woman aroun'!" Rickert had emptied the potatoes on his plate, and poured the grease over them. Now he fell silent as he shovelled them into his mouth with the knife, holding the piece of pork in his left hand and biting at it as at a wedge of pie.

Meanwhile Old Lady Rickert had broken some bread into a bowl and poured milk over it from a small pitcher. After waiting a moment for the bread to soften she began to eat it noisily with a tablespoon, gulping the milk

and munching the bits of bread between her toothless gums. With incredible swiftness Rickert cleared his plate of potatoes, finished off the pork, and swallowed his coffee. Then he reached toward the pitcher and emptied it into his big cup.

"That's all the milk they is!" protested Old Lady Rickert shrilly.

For answer he drank off the milk, then he pushed back his chair without replying, and strode into the sitting room.

"Come an' hold the lamp," he called a moment later.

She gulped the last of her milk. Then she picked up the small oil lamp from the table, passed through the sitting room into the chill and musty front room, and held up the light while he selected one from the half dozen sewing machines ranged with organs, bicycles, and tall clocks along the walls.

He tugged the machine into the sitting room, took off the cover, and while she sat by the center-table knitting, he worked with screw-driver and oil can at some of the bearings, trying the adjustment now and then with a heavy foot on the pedal. Finally the angry whir of the machine on one such trial stopped abruptly, and after a futile, excited prodding with the screw-driver he slammed down the cover and turned to wind his three good clocks, preparatory to going to bed. The sight of the check-book swelled his vexation until it choked him, and Old Lady Rickert heard him gasping and cursing as he climbed the steep stairs to the one little upstairs room.

When the door had slammed, the click of her knitting needles stopped, and she half straightened in her chair, breaking into a noiseless chuckle.

Now she could think about her teeth. When she read the letter from the lawyer announcing the unexpected legacy of a hundred dollars from a forgotten relative in Ohio, her first thought had been that now she could have her teeth.

It had been over four years since the village dentist had extracted her last

effective molar. For years before she had been all but toothless. Her naturally sharp chin had turned upward and her nose seemingly had grown down to meet it. She knew that she was unlovely in other ways, but this gratuitous disfigurement had rankled as had no other misfortune. Her whole relation to other women had been absorbed by her interest in their teeth, her jealousy of their superiority over her. She classified all womankind as those having good teeth and those lacking them; but she had never seen a woman, no matter how old, so completely disfigured by toothlessness as herself.

Twice within the last four years had the coveted false set seemed within her grasp; once when they had sold the home farm and moved to this smaller place on the end of town, and once when a good flock of turkeys, raised with endless labour and infinite precautions against "vermin" and disease, had sold well. But both times the money had gone into some machine her husband had fancied; the farm money into an old threshing machine, now unhappily traded for two worn-out clover hullers that stood side by side at the end of the barn; the turkey money for a hay loader, though they had only four acres of meadow.

She had never forgotten her impotent rage at this second injustice. She would have gone sick at the thought of it even now, but for the knowledge of the money in the sugar sack. That in the bank she had already almost ceased to think of as hers. But surely eighty dollars would buy a new set of teeth. And he shouldn't get it—he shouldn't—he shouldn't. For years she had munched soft foods and shrunk from the gaze of people she met on the road. But no more—no more. Old Lady Rickert was happy—happier than she remembered of being for many a year—happy with the happiness of those who find the long desired and seemingly unattainable suddenly within their grasp.

The dentist was cold at first, when Old Lady Rickert visited him a few days later, on the occasion of her hus-

band's first absence from home, but his attitude changed when she told him of the legacy, and before she left she had agreed to come for weekly "treatments" and for the "fitting" of the teeth.

She realized that the dentist was deliberately planning to make his bill exactly equal to her legacy; but in spite of all her penuriousness she made no attempt to resist. The teeth meant too much to her. She was willing to see every cent of the money go for them. New clothing, shoes—even the little sum saved for a rainy day to which her nature impelled her—all these things she could do without, once she had her teeth.

Of all this she said nothing to her husband. She enjoyed his evident mystification as to her intended use of the money. Apparently he did not think of her getting teeth with it, and she was glad, for she feared that in some mysterious way he might circumvent her, did he once discover her plan. He tried to probe her secret by hints and indirect questions, but was too proud to resort to open inquiry. She did not know whether he suspected that the money was in the house or not. She knew that he had cut open the feather bed on one occasion, to examine a suspected lump.

"Wisht I could o' gone thrashin' this year," he complained one evening, some three weeks after the arrival of the legacy. A threshing outfit had pulled by that afternoon, the rusty engine creeping slowly up the long hill, home-ward bound at the season's close.

"Yuh could of if yuh hadn't traded off the machine for them wuthless hullers."

"Them hullers ain't wuthless," he replied heatedly. "The yeller one's all right, all but the cyllinners. I'm goin' to get some new cyllinners and go out hullin' pretty soon now."

The old woman snorted.

"Think I won't, huh? Think you're so smart a hidin' an' a hoardin' of that money, huh, an' not givin' me no chanct to use it and make somethin'."

He stumped into the kitchen with an

air of injury, and opened the cupboard door.

Old Lady Rickert knew his favorite balm for such a mood—a lump of sugar. She listened with a sudden agony of suspense while he fumbled in the sack—suppose he should get into the wrong one. He was munching something when he returned to wind his clocks, and she saw with relief, out of the corner of her keen eye, that the lump was brown.

### III

THERE came a cold morning, a fortnight later, when Old Lady Rickert found the fires already built and her husband out milking when she came down stairs in the morning. Seldom indeed did this occur. It was the more remarkable in view of the fact that he had been "over town" until ten o'clock the night before. She felt a vague pre-sentiment of impending evil as he clumped noisily on the back steps, evidently pausing to clean his boots.

He set the half-filled milk pail on the kitchen table, pulled off his boots and chore jacket, and shuffled into the sitting-room.

"Thought we'd better have a little fire in the heater this morning," he remarked with an awkward attempt at geniality. "Pretty snappy out this morning."

He opened the screw draft at the base of the low wood heater until the fire roared redly up the battered pipe, then stood shifting uneasily as he warmed first one foot, then the other, on the fender.

"Say," he began finally, "I want yuh should let me borry that money o' yours fer—fer sixty days. I got a chanct to git a clover huller dirt cheap—out north o' town—one with new cyllinners; an' I'm goin' to put them cyllinners in the yeller machine an' git Peterson's engine, an' do a lot o' hullin'. They's lots cutting fer seed this fall. Seed's awful good. I'll make—say—whut'r yuh laughin' at?"

It was true. Old Lady Rickert was

laughing—laughing with a horrible mockery of triumph—a grotesque feeding fat of a long-repressed desire for power.

"Yuh can't have it!" she shrilled. "It ain't yours!"

"I ain't askin' yuh to give it to me, don't yuh unnestan'? Jest a loan. I'll pay it back to yuh."

"Don't make no diffunce! Yuh couldn't have it if I wanted to give it to yuh. I've spent it!"

"Spent it?" His jaw dropped. "An' I've gone an' bargained fer that machine—I thought sure—what fer?" He shot the question at her.

"Fer teeth!" It was her moment of consummation.

"Fer teeth—all fer teeth?"

"Yessir—every cent fer teeth—them teeth that I've been doin' without all these years, an' yuh took the money I scrimped to git 'em an' made me look like a parrot. They're all made an' I'm goin' to git 'em tomorrow—an' I'm goin' to pay cash on deliv'ry—an yuh'll never see a dollar o' that money Lem Rickert!"

He purpled with rage. "Yuh won't give it to me, huh, yah grubby hag! After I git down and eat dirt to yuh, askin' yuh to len' it to me! Damn you, I'll fix yer face so yuh won't need no teeth—I'll fix yuh—"

He seized the poker from its hook by the stove and slashed at her viciously.

She scurried around the table, then behind the stove.

"Don't—I'll screech!" she began as he raised the poker again.

But his forearm struck the stovepipe, now red-hot, and he dropped the poker with a yell of pain. The pipe was thrust dangerously away, and flames poured out around its base. He thrust the pipe uncertainly into position with the poker, then, shocked by the pain and the danger, he sank into a chair.

"Fer God's sake git me some cream an' a cloth quick, woman," he begged. "I near killed myself."

For answer she slipped out the side door and around the house. Through the window she saw him a moment later

striding to the door. He stared vaguely out into the sunrise over the village, then stumbled into the kitchen. She heard a rattle of dishes and pans, and knew that he was trying to dress his burns.

For a moment she was drawn to go in and help him, but the thought of his curses—of the uplifted poker—withheld her.

Cautiously she peered in the window again. He had given up the attempt at bandaging, and was gingerly pulling on his jacket over the injured arm. Then he stepped to the cupboard, and she saw him empty the brown sugar sack into his jacket pocket. He sat down to draw on his boots, and she had barely time to scurry around the corner before he came out, kicked the door shut, and plunged off toward the barn.

She entered the house in a fever of excitement. She had not realized that the brown sugar was so nearly gone. He would start on the white next, and find the money. In her excitement it did not occur to her to change the hiding place. She must get some more brown sugar and get it quickly. She pulled on her shoes, drew a shawl around her shoulders, and stepping out the seldom-used front door, ran shamblingly down the long hill toward town.

It was a long way, and her haste in going down seemed to leave her so weak that she could barely crawl on the return climb, try as she might to hurry. When she reached her house, she noticed that the driveway gate was open. She ran to the barn. The horses and spring wagon had disappeared. Where could he have gone? Not to town, or she would have met him.

In a sudden spasm of fear she darted to the house and into the kitchen. On the table was a tumbled pyramid of white sugar, a torn sack beside it. She did not need to run her fingers through the pile: the money was gone.

For a moment she was faint. Then she was transfigured by a sudden accession of insane fury. She seized a broom and pounded the top of the cold range, screaming broken curses; she knocked

down the stovepipes, slashed at the dishes in the cupboard, pried the side of the cupboard until the whole fell with a crash to the floor. Then she rushed into the sitting-room and thrust the broom-handle into the faces of the three clocks. Suddenly she stopped short, held by the long black check-book. She looked at it a moment, then dropped the broom and hugging the book to her thin breasts ran swiftly from the house, crying aloud, her cheeks wet with tears.

#### IV

SHE ran blindly across the little pasture and the neighbor's stubble field. A vague plan gradually formed in her mind. She would go to her daughter's across the valley. She would never come back to him—never. Perhaps her daughter would let her raise chickens; she had to go somewhere; she couldn't stay here. She clutched the check-book like the body of a child—dead symbol of her hope of years—and as she stumbled over the uneven ground she still cried bitterly, as the old cry in hopeless disappointment.

'She was descending the steep slope now to the level floor of the valley, where the Branch loped its way toward the west. She would have to cross a cornfield, then follow the stream until she came to a ford. She wondered if it would be much swollen by the fall rains.

The dead blades of the corn cut her hands and face as she picked her way between the tall stalks, some of them as thick as her wrist. This early bottom land corn had already been gathered and the soft creamy-white husks still hung in long bunches, sometimes two or three to a stalk, a few brown silks among them. For an hour the old woman laboured on, losing her direction now and then, stumbling over the moist soil, stooping under leaning stalks, tripping over ridges. When finally she reached the wooded pasture that bordered the Branch, the late October sun was at its zenith.

She had to crawl between taut barbed wires and a low woven wire to get from

the cornfield into the pasture, and she tore her dress and gashed a finger as she did so. This pasture she knew to be a part of the great farm of a banker in town—over two thousand acres of rough land along the Branch in one great enclosure, where hundreds of cattle and hogs were pastured. But the greater part of the area lay on the other side, and as the barns were on that side far down the Branch, the stock rarely penetrated to the part of the pasture which she had to cross to reach the stream. As a result the brush and weeds had grown in thick tangles, interspersed with masses of silt and dried wood left by the Branch in its last flood. She progressed very slowly, with many cuts and scratches, and with an occasional fall that jarred her whole body. Her scant hair hung down her back in a loose braid like a girl's.

The Branch was swollen; brown bubbles and dots of foam spun swiftly on its surface. She looked at it dully. She would have to go down to the railroad arch, and that meant a mile or more through this tangle. But she couldn't cross anywhere here. She watched the water a moment, then turned wearily to circle a backwater that lay in her path.

She was in a shadow as she scrambled up the east side of the embankment at the big stone arch. The sun was already half-way down the horizon. She paused a moment to look for a train, but none was in sight up or down the straight ridge of brick-red ballast with its shining gray rails.

As she started across, she saw a rabbit suddenly leap into the stream from below a sheer bank on the side she was just leaving. It fought desperately to swim across, but the current swept it swiftly down toward her. Close to the bank she glimpsed a brown shadow paralleling it, and guessed why it had attempted the desperate crossing. Its struggles grew less vigorous in the cold water, and at last, where the current slowed at the arch, it crept out on the mud bank almost directly beneath her. Instantly the mink was upon it, and she heard a gasping squeak.

In a burst of sympathy and anger she shrieked and hurled the spraddling check-book downward. The mink vanished, alarmed by the noise and the fluttering of the white leaves. But the rabbit lay quiet save for a spasmodic kicking, and the book fell in the water, floated a few feet, and disappeared.

She burst out crying as for one bereaved. Kneeling on the rail she strained her eyes for the book. There was nothing but the dead rabbit, quiet now. Well, she would take the rabbit. It was not a symbol as had been the book. But she felt a vague kinship with it. Climbing down she raised it tenderly and fondled it in her arms, rubbing her cheek against its wet fur. Then she pulled her shoes out of the sucking mud, toiled up the embankment again, and crossed the Branch.

It was easier going on the other side, but there were steep bluffs to climb, where she had to pull herself up, holding saplings and hazel bushes with one hand while with the other she clutched the stiffening body of the rabbit. Beyond were broad ridge pastures of long brown grass, only half-grazed, and knotted in bunches that caught at her feet and tripped her.

It was night when she crept through the fence that bordered the road a mile from her daughter's home. Her black calico dress was tattered by the bush and the fences, her hands caked with mud, grime and blood. Her unbound gray hair hung about her face.

The yellow moon rising slowly, drenched the world in rich light. The

earth exhaled the mildness that sometimes makes an October night in Iowa seem warmer than the day. She walked with bent head, occasionally caressing the lifeless rabbit, murmuring softly to its silence. Intention and recollection had been blotted from her mind. In utter physical exhaustion, forgetful of everything except the hopelessness of all, she crept through the warm dust.

Her daughter, standing on her porch, first called "Ma?" doubtfully, then came running heavily to the road.

"Oh, Ma!" she cried, "Ma! Where have you—Oh my, Ed's on the road lookin' for you—did he pass you—what makes you look so, Ma?"

The old woman was roused to a vague impulse of protest. She gathered all her strength for denial. "I ain't goin' back—if he's come for me, you tell him I ain't."

"Oh, Ma, Pa ain't come for you. He won't never. Pa's dead."

"Dead?" She blinked at her daughter, pushing the gray hair back from her face.

"Yes, he bought a clover huller an' was haulin' it home, guess the tongue was rotten or team was too light or sumthin'—anyway, it got away from him on the big Lambert hill and run in a ditch and mashed him. He was dead when they found him. Oh, Ma—an' you was gone—what was it fer—?"

"I don't know, Aggie." She stroked the soft fur of the dead rabbit uncertainly, holding it tenderly against her breast. "I guess I'll go in an' lay down a bit. I'm all beat out."



**I**N her dealings with men a woman should be all interest and no principle.



## Hellenica

*By Leslie Nelson Jennings*

**W**ORDS will elude the lips, but the old magnificent music,  
Lost to us where we are, will thunder down the years,  
Breaking along the coasts of Time like a shadowy ocean,  
Rich with remembered days, imperious with tears.

Olive and oak and vine, and the bright brows crowned with myrtle,  
The high heroic deeds that Northern men forget;  
Tenderness drowned in wine; the sound of the flute and crotal,  
And Cyprus, like a star, in blue and silver set.

Wanderers over the world, harborless, marked for disaster,  
By adverse winds pursued across unpassaged foam . . .  
Only your breast, Belovèd, can comfort me who am lonely;  
Only a barge of dreams can bear me safely home.

Oh, I am sick for the murmur the sea makes; for the golden,  
Prodigal gifts the Gods bestowed on us, their own;  
Fruit of the moderate South, and the delicate-scented garlands  
Woven of roses dead, from soil no longer sown!

Oh, I am sick for the gallant glint of an oar blade lifted;  
Sick for the splendid sweep of mighty armies flung  
Against the walls of the city—the shouts and the furious conflict—  
Sick to retell it all in some far gentler tongue!

Words will elude the lips, but the old magnificent music,  
Lost to us where we are, will give our hearts no peace.  
Beauty and days departed still trouble us in our exile:  
Oh to return to you, Homeric hills of Greece!



**A** MAN changes his opinion of his wife after marriage. A woman doesn't change her opinion of her husband—merely her demeanor.



# Cordite for Concerts

By Carl Van Vechten

## I.

SINCE the Florentines, whom we may credit with some taste in the matter of art, invented the opera, not a month has passed without some glabrous-headed numskull or other rising to shrilly proclaim that the lyric drama is a by-blow form, not worthy of consideration by respectable, serious-minded lovers of music.

Others than numskulls, indeed, have offered contributions to this popular cause. Addison and Charles Lamb ridiculed the opera, and every critic of today has slugged it with cherry-pits and pebbles. What seems to have escaped attention is the fact that of all music-forms the opera, valiantly withstanding these attacks, has remained the most consistently popular. It is even "reformed" every half century or so by a Glück, a Meyerbeer, a Wagner, or a Debussy. Also, I may add, the very music critics who affect a staggering contemptuousness for the music drama in the abstract, spend a great deal of unnecessary time at the Metropolitan Opera House and write a great many unnecessary words about the performances there. The explanation of this phenomenon, I am inclined to believe, after some personal observation of the gentlemen in question, is that they like it.

Personally, I will admit frankly that I prefer the opera even when it is bad to a good symphony concert. No music is good enough to stand up against the depressing circumstances of a performance at Carnegie Hall. At the opera, on the other hand, there is mystery: a white arm laid carelessly over the ledge of a box in the dim light; the

jewels and the silver and gold head-dresses gleam in the soft glow; a feathered fan half-conceals a whispered word of love or perhaps a kiss. Even on the stage, however mediocre the singing and acting, there is some display of personality, something to talk about. And in the opera house there is the opportunity to talk. Besides, I can walk in or walk out, sit down or stand up; I am not forced to wait for the band to stop playing before I take or relinquish my seat. These are superficial advantages; the heart of the matter lies deeper: the fact is that opera was written for the opera house and it belongs there. You may not care for opera, but if it amuses you, you like it in the opera house.

Listening recently to a concert of the Schola Cantorum at Carnegie Hall, a feeling that had been groping for expression for some time crystallized within me, a feeling that concerts should not be given in halls, a feeling that even the idea of the concert as it exists is a false and artificial one. It is impossible for me to enjoy music in a brilliantly lighted, badly ventilated hall, in the midst of a crowd of elderly, anserine ladies and gentlemen or juveniles, rapt or bored or merely fatuous, the conductor panting and sweating, the men of the orchestra sawing and blowing, and a soprano weighing four hundred pounds puffing through "Ocean, thou mighty monster!" The zest for conductors, *Dirigentenliebe*, is an amusing form of nymphomania. For there are ladies who prefer the baton to the uniform. Each one of these must have her own *Kapellmeister*. There is impending danger of an epidemic in this neurotic disorder, and I do not think

it improbable that New York in the course of three or four years will have thirty or forty symphony orchestras as a result. I must admit that attending their concerts would give me coeliac pains, but it amuses me to watch the fandango from the safe distance which my garret affords. It is from that distance, indeed, that I will watch all concerts hereafter. More, if I were permitted my way, music should never be played again at concerts.

## II.

LET us consider the occasion to which I have just referred. The estimable ladies and gentlemen who form the choir of the Schola Cantorum, the gentlemen in evening dress, the ladies in white and blue and pink frocks, performed three numbers, the Kyrie, the Gloria, and the Credo, from Palestrina's "Missa Papae Marcelli." This mass is a lofty and noble work. It is also difficult, in the sense that all crystal things are difficult, in the sense that it is more difficult to sing "Vedrai Carino" than it is to sing "Vissi d'Arte," although Puccini's aria requires a higher and heavier voice. The ladies and gentlemen wandered through Palestrina's labyrinthine measures correctly enough, no doubt, but the effect was abominable. This mass—any mass—was not written to be sung correctly by ladies and gentlemen in evening dress to the polite approbation and discreet applause of two thousand Godless souls, the majority of whom, doubtless, had never set foot in a Catholic church. This mass—any mass—will only sound right if wafted out of the invisible galleries of some dimly lit cathedral, odoriferous with incense, the emblems and symbols of demonology as close to mind in the fantastic carvings on the pillars and baptismal fonts as the emblems and symbols of angelology in the altar, the candles, and the vestments of the priests. The audience, the congregation, what you will, must be familiar with the intention of the mass, nay, more, they must enter into the spirit of its

celebration and believe in its carminative powers. Under such circumstances, with however little authority the boy Pattis may attack the high C's, the communicants will not be disturbed by these descents from the pitch. They will either doze decently or be lifted into sublimity and the vagueness of the tones will even enhance the effect. Amelita Galli-Curci herself could make me listen in a dimly lit, odoriferous, damp cathedral.

The second part of the program was devoted to Spanish folk-music. The ladies and gentlemen of the choir, following the ridiculous fashion of our concert halls, stood up and stood still while they intoned the sardanas and other dance-songs, which were created to be shouted out by peasants, stepping merrily about, waving handkerchiefs, and exchanging busses. Several of these songs were performed as solos by the languorous and sinisterly Venusian Marguerite d'Alvarez, who gave them an authentic enough interpretation, but the very vividness of her recital warned one of the falseness of her attack. In the respectable confines of Carnegie Hall, she made her auditors self-conscious. Corsets and white shirts grew stiffer. Collars refused to wilt. But had she been transplanted to some dirty Andalusian tavern, where she might sit in a corner, wrapped sombrely in a splendid Manila shawl, while she sang in the smoke-laden atmosphere to the accompaniment of the strumming of guitars and to the shrill, shouting cries of a dozen gipsy girls, her

*Viva Triana!  
Vivan los Sevillanos  
y Sevillanas!*

would flame into life and even her cradle-songs and celebrations of the Virgin Mary would make their true effect.

## III.

THERE is a place for hearing music as well as a time, and I have sworn a vow if I can only listen to music in

the concert hall I will hear it no more . . . unless, like the ladies, I may be permitted to choose my own conductor and enjoy the delights of *Dirigentenliebe*, and here the ladies hold me at a great disadvantage, for Alice Delysia and Pola Negri do not wave the baton with the authentic gesture of Arthur Nikisch and Thomas Beecham.

To return to my theorem, let me particularize. Why do you enjoy "l'Après-midi d'un Faune" more when it is given as a ballet than when it is performed in the concert hall? Because the music is played in a suggestive atmosphere, the action and the colors and the lights supplying the place filled in the concert hall by the program notes, which are rustled and turned while the flute purls softly. But the ideal spot in which to listen to this music would be an ancient hillside near some ruined Greek temple, the band hidden and mysterious and not too near. Then one could imagine the stately obscene ceremony between the fauns and nymphs.

Chopin's music, indubitably, should be performed in a drawing-room, an Empire or a Louis XVI drawing-room, to be precise. There should be countesses present, with firm round breasts and spreading crinolines, and if a princess or an archduchess can be provided, so much the better. Between the mazurkas and the polonaises, servants in livery should pass ices and if a young woman can be persuaded to faint occasionally, the effect will be heightened. The flowers should be lilies, tube-roses, and gardenias, pale but strongly aromatic blooms.

Funeral marches, wedding marches, and Strauss waltzes fall into their proper environments at times, but where should one listen to the music of Brahms? Experience tells me that the music of Brahms sounds best in a German public garden, with plenty of good beer, Pilsener or Münchener, in hefty seidels, close at hand, and more good beer in vast barrels in the nearby cellar. It will do no harm to eat black and white radishes while you give ear to the F major and Frankfurters will go well

with the D major. Brahms would be the first to be delighted with this scheme and if he is conducting his scores in the halls of Eblis, I have no doubt he has already thought of trying it himself.

For the Mozart symphonies, a rococo ballroom is required, the ceiling elaborately ornamented with plaster putti, gold Eroses, and stucco roses. If Fragonard or Boucher painted the wall-panels, that will be an advantage, and it will do no hurt to the music if they be a little indecent. The orchestra will be visible and the men must wear red coats and knee breeches of some eighteenth century style, and they must be peruked. The leader must wear the biggest peruke of all; it should tower at least two feet above his head, and however high he may stand on his toes in the ecstasy of the beat, his heels must never leave the floor, for these heels, red too, must be at least five inches high.

Scriabine designed a temple suitable for the performance of his own music, music which requires a certain amount of subaudition, a temple of odors and colors that might have pleased des Esseintes. This temple has not yet been erected but compromises have been attempted. For instance, the Russian Symphony Orchestra played his "Prometheus" before a moving picture screen on which colored lights were projected and merged by means of a keyboard with an electric attachment. The effect made was a good deal like an attempt to illustrate Siegfried's Rhine Journey with appropriate accompanying action in a washtub.

Leo Ornstein, whose favorite figure in composition is anacoluthon, should play his music on a piano balanced on a pushcart, the whole moved to the middle of Manhattan Bridge. His audience should pass in motor-cars, the chauffeurs tooting their sirens; in street-cars, the motormen madly clanging their bells, and in aeroplanes, in which the engines throbbed deafeningly. The result would be Jovian! I have enjoyed "The Wild Men's Dance" and the "Impressions of the Thames" even in the

concert hall, but if I heard them under these circumstances, I should probably burst a blood-vessel.

Where should the music of Richard Strauss be performed? Hardly any two of his compositions in the same place, I should say. "Ein Heldenleben" would sound best in front of the banal colonnade and monument of Vittorio Emanuele at Rome; the "Symphonia Domestica" in Wanamaker's; "Don Quixote" in a farmyard; "Tod und Verklärung" in Roosevelt Hospital; and "Don Juan" in a brothel or, at least, a temple of love. In lieu of program notes, copies of the "Contes Drolatiques," the Sonnets of Pietro Aretino, and "Le Journal d'une Femme de Chambre should be presented to the customers.

#### IV.

CHAMBER music, as I have pointed out elsewhere, is written to be played and not to be listened to. Such pleasure as it gives is subjective rather than objective. As songs are a species of chamber music they are perhaps most effective if sung in a drawing-room, although there are exceptions to this rule. I have carried d'Alvarez and her Spanish ditties to an Andalusian tavern. "The Two Grenadiers" should be sung in vaudeville; Debussy's "La Cheve-

lure" should be sung in bed; and Mrs. Beach's "The Year's at the Spring" should be sung at the meetings of the National Academy of Arts and Letters. As for the song recital, so-called, it is an abomination, a monstrous form of entertainment foisted on us by the musical snobs, who insist that the program shall be arranged according to their laws, a classic group, a group of German lieder, a French group, etc., and that the singer shall interpret these without a gesture, standing dignifiedly near the centre of the platform. There are signs that healthy interpreters with a touch of genius are breaking away from this absurd tradition.

Only concertos seems to belong essentially to the concert hall. They are written for just this kind of audience, just this kind of place. The soloist, violinist or singer or jew's-harpist, dramatizes the thing and centres the attention *visually* on himself. It is Kreisler's Beethoven, or Ysaye's Beethoven, or Sarasate's, or Paganini's, or Liszt's. Yes, this is freak music and the atmosphere of the concert hall is entirely consistent with it.

To conclude in a major key, I would say that it is obvious that some music should never be played anywhere. At the head of this class stand the compositions of Sir Edward Elgar.



**L**OVE is the disposition to say flattering things. Marriage, the disposition to regret them.



**A** WISE man knows everything. A shrewd one, everybody.



# In Defense of the Theatre

By George Jean Nathan

## I

THE theatre stands in relation to drama much as the art gallery stands in relation to painting. Its aim is to set off drama in such surroundings and in such light as to bring it within the comfortable vision and agreeable scrutiny of the nomad public. To say that fine drama may produce an equal effect read as acted may be true or not as you choose, but so too a fine painting may produce an equal effect beheld in one's library as in the Uffizi. Art thrives—art leads to art—on sympathy and a measure of general understanding. Otherwise, of what use criticism? To divorce the theatre from a consideration of drama as an art, to contend, as it has been contended from Aristotle's day to Corneille's, and from Dryden's and Lamb's to our own, that "the more lasting and noble design" of drama rests in a reading rather than a seeing, may be, strictly, a logical æsthetic manœuvre, but equally a logical æsthetic manœuvre would be a divorcement of canvas from painting as an art. The theatre is the canvas of drama. The printed drama is like a bubbling and sunlit spring, encountered only by wanderers into the hills and awaiting the bottling process of the theatre to carry its tonic waters far and wide among an expectant and emotionally ill people.

The criticism that nominates itself to hold drama and the theatre as things apart is a criticism which, for all its probable integrity and reason, suffers from an excessive aristocracy, like a duchess in a play by Mr. Sydney Grundy. Its æsthetic nose is elevated to such a degree that it may no longer

serve as a practical organ of earthly smell, but merely as a quasi-wax feature to round out the symmetry of the face. It is criticism in a stiff corset, erect, immobile, lordly—like the Prussian lieutenant of yesterday, a striking figure, yet just a little absurd. It is sound, but like many things that are sound in æsthetics, it has its weak points, even its confounding points. For they say that propaganda can have no place in art, and along comes a Hauptmann and writes a "Weavers." Or they say that art is form, and along comes a Richard Strauss and composes two songs for baritone and orchestra that set the critics to a mad chasing of their own tails. To hold that the drama as an art may achieve its highest end read by the individual and not acted in the theatre, is to hold that music as an art may achieve its highest end played by but one instrument and not by an orchestra. The theatre is the drama's orchestra: upon the wood of its boards and the wind of its puppets is the melody of drama in all its full richness sounded. What if drama is art and the theatre not art? What if "Hamlet" is art and electric lights and cheese-cloth are not art? Schubert's piano trio, op. 99, is art, and a pianoforte is a mere wooden box containing a number of little hammers that hit an equal number of steel and copper wires. What if I can read a full imagination into "Romeo and Juliet" and thus people it and make it live for me, without going to the theatre? So, too, can I read a full melody into the manuscript of a song by Hugo Wolf and thus make it sing for me, without going to a concert hall. But why? Is there only one way to appreciate and

enjoy art—and since when? Wagner on a single violin is Wagner; Wagner on all the orchestra is super-Wagner. To read a great drama is to play "Parsifal" on a cornet and an oboe.

The object of the theatre is not, as is habitually maintained, a shrewd excitation of the imagination of a crowd, but rather a shrewd relaxation of that imagination. It is a faulty critical axiom that holds the greatest actor in the theatre to be an audience's imagination, and the adroit cultivation of the latter to be ever productive of large financial return. As I have on more than one occasion pointed out from available and acutely relevant statistics, the more a dramatist relies upon the imagination of an audience, the less the box-office reward that is his. An audience fills a theatre auditorium not so eager to perform with its imagination as to have its imagination performed upon. This is not the paradox it may superficially seem to be. The difference is the difference between a prompt commercial failure like Molnar's "Der Leibofficier" ("Where Ignorance Is Bliss") which asks an audience to perform with its imagination and a great commercial success like Barrie's "Peter Pan" which performs upon the audience's imagination by supplying to it every detail of imagination, ready-made and persuasively labeled. The theatre is not a place to which one goes in search of the unexplored corners of one's imagination; it is a place to which one goes in repeated search of the familiar corners of one's imagination. The moment the dramatist works in the direction of unfamiliar corners, he is lost. This, contradictorily enough, is granted by the very critics who hold to the imagination fallacy which I have just described. They unanimously agree that a dramatist's most successful cultivation of an audience lies in what they term, and nicely, the mood of recognition, and in the same breath paradoxically contend that sudden imaginative shock is a desideratum no less.

In this pleasant remission of the active imagination lies one of the secrets of the charm of the theatre. Nor is the theatre alone in this. On even the higher plane of the authentic arts a measure of the same phenomenon assists in what may perhaps not too far-fetchedly be termed the negative stimulation of the spectator's fancy. For all the pretty and winning words to the contrary, no person capable of sound introspection will admit that a beautiful painting like Giorgione's "The Concert" or a beautiful piece of sculpture like Pisano's Perugian fountain actually and literally stirs his imagination, and sets it a-sail across hitherto uncharted æsthetic seas. What such a painting or piece of sculpture does is to reach out and, with its overpowering beauty, encompass and æsthetically fence in the antecedent wandering and uncertain imagination of its spectator. As in the instance of drama, it does not so much awaken a dormant imagination as soothe an imagination already awake. Of all the arts, music alone remains a telegrapher of unborn dreams.

The theatre brings to the art of drama concrete movement, concrete colour and concrete final effectiveness: this, in all save a few minor particulars. The art of drama suffers, true enough, when the theatre, even at its finest, is challenged by it to produce the values intrinsic in its ghost of a dead king, or in its battle on Bosworth Field, or in its ship torn by the tempest, or in its fairy wood on mid-summer night, or in its approaching tread of doom of the gods of the mountain. But for each such defeat it prospers doubly in the gifts that the theatre brings to it. Such gifts as the leader Craig has brought to the furtherance of the beauty of "Electra" and "Hamlet," as Reinhardt and his aides have brought to "Ariadne" and "Julius Cæsar," as Golovine and Appia and Bakst and Linnebach and half a dozen others have brought to the classics that have called to them, are not small ones. They have crystallized the glory of drama,

have taken so many loose jewels and given them substantial and appropriate settings which have fittingly posed their radiance.

To say that the reading imagination of the average cultured man is superior in power of suggestion and depiction to the imagination of the theatre is idiotically to say that the reading imagination of every average cultured man is superior in these powers to the combined theatrical imaginations of Gordon Craig, Max Reinhardt and Eleanora Duse operating jointly upon the same play. Even a commonplace imagination can successfully conjure up a landscape more beautiful than any painted by Poussin or Gainsborough, or jewels more opalescent than any painted by Rembrandt, or a woman's dress more luminous than any painted by Fortuny, or nymphs more beguiling than any of Rubens', yet who so foolish to say—as they are wont foolishly to say of reading imagination and the drama—that such an imagination is therefore superior to that of the artists? This, in essence, is none the less the serious contention of those who decline to reconcile themselves to the theatrically produced drama. This contention, reduced to its skeleton, is that, since the vice-president of the Corn Exchange Bank can picture the chamber in the outbuilding adjoining Gloster's castle more greatly to his satisfaction than Adolphe Appia can picture it for him on the stage, the mental performance of the former is therefore a finer artistic achievement than the stage performance of the latter.

## II

THE word imagination leads critics to queer antics. It is, perhaps, the most manhandled word in our critical vocabulary. It is used almost invariably in its literal meaning: no shades and shadows are vouchsafed to it. Imagination, in good truth, is not the basis of art, but an overtone. Many an inferior artist has a greater imagination than many a superior artist. Maeter-

linck's imagination is much richer than Hauptmann's, Erik Satie's is much richer than César Franck's, and I am not at all certain that Romain Rolland's is not twice as opulent as Thomas Hardy's. Imagination is the slave of the true artist, the master of the weak. The true artist beats imagination with the cat-o'-nine-tails of his individual technic until it cries out in pain, and this pain is the work of art which is born. The inferior craftsman comfortably confounds imagination with the finished work, and so pets and coddles it; and imagination's resultant mincings and giggles he then vaingloriously sets forth as resolute art.

The theatre offers to supplement, embroider and enrich the imagination of the reader of drama with the imaginations of the actor, the scene designer, the musician, the costumer and the producing director. Each of these, before he sets himself to his concrete task, has—like the lay reader—sought the fruits of his own reading imagination. The fruits of these five reading imaginations are then assembled, carefully assorted, and the most worthy of them deftly burbanked. The final staging of the drama is merely a staging of these best fruits of the various reading imaginations. To say, against this, that it is most often impossible to render a reading imagination into satisfactory concrete forms is doubtless to say what is, strictly, true. But art itself is at its highest merely an approach toward limitless imagination and beauty. *Æsthetics* is a pilgrim on the road to a Mecca that is ever just over the skyline. Of how many great works of art can one say, with complete and final conviction, that art in this particular direction can conceivably go no farther? Is it not conceivable that some super-Michelangelo will some day fashion an even more perfect "Slave," and some super-Shakespeare an even more beautiful poetic drama?

The detractors of the theatre are often expert in persuasive half-truths and masters of dialectic sleight-of-hand. Their performances are often so

adroit that the spectator is quick to believe that the trunk is really empty, yet the false bottom is there for all its cunning concealment. Take, for example, George Moore, in the preface to his latest play, "The Coming of Gabrielle." "The illusion created by externals, scenes, costumes, lighting and short sentences is in itself illusory," he professes to believe, though why he numbers the dramatist's short sentences among the externals of the stage is not quite clear. "The best performances of plays and operas are witnessed at rehearsals. Jean de Reszke was never so like Tristan at night as he was in the afternoon when he sang the part in a short jacket, a bowler hat and an umbrella in his hand. The chain armour and the plumes that he wore at night were but a distraction, setting our thoughts on periods, on the short swords in use in the ninth century in Ireland or in Cornwall, on the comfort or the discomfort of the ships in which the lovers were voyaging, on the absurd night-dress which is the convention that Isolde should appear in, a garment she never wore and which we know to be make-believe. But the hat and feathers that Isolde appears in when she rehearses the part are forgotten the moment she sings; and if I had to choose to see Forbes-Robertson play Hamlet or rehearse Hamlet, I should not hesitate for a moment. The moment he speaks he ceases to be a modern man, but in black hose the illusion ceases, for we forget the Prince of Denmark and remember the mummer."

Years ago, in a volume of critical essays given the title "Another Book on the Theatre," I took a boyish delight in setting off precisely the same noisy fire-work just to hear the folks in the piazza rocking-chairs let out a yell. These half-truths serve criticism as sauce serves asparagus: they give tang to what is otherwise often tasteless food. This is particularly true with criticism at its most geometrical and profound, since such criticism, save in rare instances, is not especially lively reading. But, nevertheless, the sauce

is not the asparagus. And when Mr. Moore (doubtless with his tongue in his cheek) observes that he can much more readily imagine the lusty Frau Tillie Pfirsich-Melba as Isolde in a pink and green ostrich feather hat concocted in some Friedrichstrasse atelier than in the customary stage trappings, he allows, by implication, that he might even more readily imagine the elephantine lady as the seductive Carmen if she had no clothes on at all.

This is the trouble with paradoxes. It is not that they prove too little, as is believed of them, but that they prove altogether too much. If the illusion created by stage externals is in itself illusory, as Moore says, the complete deletion of all such stage externals should be the best means for providing absolute illusion. Yet the complete absence of illusion where this is the case is all too familiar to any of us who have looked on such spectacles as "The Bath of Phryne" and the like in the theatres of Paris. A prodigality of stage externals does not contribute to disillusion, but to illusion. These externals have become, through protracted usage, so familiar that they are, so to speak, scarcely seen: they are taken by the eye for granted. By way of proof, one need only consider two types of Shakespearian production, one like that of Robert Mantell and one like that lately employed for "Macbeth" by Arthur Hopkins. Where the overladen stereotyped first production paradoxically fades out of the picture for the spectator and leaves the path of illusion clear for him, the superlatively simple second production, almost wholly bereft of familiar externals, arrests and fixes his attention and makes illusion impossible. It is true, of course, that all this may be changed in time, when the deletion of externals by the new stage-craft shall have become a convention of the theatre as the heavy laying-on of externals is a convention at present. But, as things are today, these externals are, negatively, the most positive contributors to illusion.

It is the misfortune of the

theatre that critics have most always approached it, and entered it, with a defiant and challenging air. I have, during the eighteen years of my active critical service, met with and come to know at least fifty professional critics in America, in England and on the Continent, and among all this number there have been but four who have approached the theatre enthusiastically prejudiced in its favour—two of them asses. But between the one large group that has been critically hostile and the other smaller group that has been uncritically effervescent, I have encountered no sign of calm and reasoned compromise, no sign of frank and intelligent willingness to regard each and every theatre as a unit, and so to be appraised, instead of lumping together good and bad theatres alike and labeling the heterogeneous mass "the theatre." There is no such thing as "the theatre." There is this theatre, that theatre, and still that other theatre. Each is a unit. To talk of "the theatre" is to talk of the Greek theatre, the Elizabethan theatre and the modern theatre in one breath, or to speak simultaneously of the Grosses Schauspielhaus of Max Reinhardt and the Eltinge Theatre of Al Woods. "The theatre," of course, has certain more or less minor constant and enduring conventions—at least, so it seems as far as we now can tell—but so, too, has chirography, yet we do not speak of "the chirography." There are some theatres—I use the word in its proper restricted sense—that glorify drama and enhance its beauty; there are others that vitiate drama. But so also are there some men who write fine drama, and others who debase drama to mere fodder for witlings. . . . The Shakespeare of the theatre of Gordon Craig is vivid and brilliant beauty. Call it art or not art as you will—what does a label matter? The Molière of the theatre of Alexander Golovine is suggestive and exquisite enchantment. Call it art or not art as you will—what does a label matter? The Wagner of the opera house of Ludwig Sievert is triumphant and rapturous

splendour. Call it anything you like—and again, what does a label matter? There are too many labels in the world.

### III

ANOTHER season begins to pump up steam. The velvety vaudeville of Mr. Ziegfeld and the undisguised burlesque of Mr. George White give way to the newest masterpieces of the Broadway Pineros and Feydeaux. First to be revealed was "The Skylark," a comedy by Thomas B. Robinson, product of the Baker mill at Harvard. The venerable theme of a husband and wife gone emotionally stale and advised by a débonnaire Charles Hawtrey to try divorce as a means of regaining their lost taste for each other was here laboriously deleted of its original virtues, given a fricassee of meek epigrams, and served up by a company of actors who toed the footlights like so many champing distance runners and suddenly let go each of their lines as if on pistol cues. Miss Charlotte Walker played the rôle of the impetuous young wife in the accepted Bromo-Seltzer ingénue manner; Miss Marguerita Sylva the rôle of the sapient widow with the customary half-lidded blowing out of cigarette smoke; Mr. Eric Maxon the Hawtrey rôle in a manner that betrayed an acute consciousness of, and immeasurable pride in, a pair of marvelously creased trousers; and an actor whose name escapes me the rôle of a dominie with the usual mouse voice and with the tips of his fingers pressed together over his abdomen.

Following this trump came "The Teaser," a profound character study by Martha Stanley and Adelaide Matthews, authors of those equally relentless and penetrating pictures of life, "Nightie Night," "Scrambled Wives" and "Just Married." Whether the estimable Martha and the no less estimable Adelaide are mademoiselle or madame I wot not, but their view of the modern *jeune fille* is typically that of the maiden lady. An amusing farce

comedy might be written around the character of the flapper warm-icicle, but all that the present authors have succeeded in getting out of the idea is a much diluted and somewhat better mannered version of Cosmo Hamilton's box-office bumper of yesteryear, "Scandal." There is a faint flash of observation in the first few minutes of the play's dialogue, but promptly thereafter the enterprise sinks to the low level of the average Rialto rehash. There is no ingenuity in the devising of situations, and the third act climax is a Sydney Grundy imitation of a Henry Arthur Jones revamping of the climax of "Lady Windermere's Fan," with a vaudeville "tag." The authors would appear further to enjoy writing into their own work any lines that appeal to them in the works of others, since my sleuth ear detected two that are in either my last published book or in the one just preceding. One of these two lines is very good indeed, and I equally enjoyed writing it into my work when it appealed to me in the conversation of Mr. Gilbert Miller.

"The Teaser," a catch-penny title hung onto a play that originally carried a more sedate label, is banal in every detail save the idea with which the authors started out and which haplessly eluded them a few moments after the first curtain crawled up into the flies. Miss Faire Binney has the name part and manages it nicely, particularly the scene of attempted seduction in the third act. It is a so-called "type" performance that succeeds by virtue of an absence of acting. Miss Jane Grey, on the other hand, acts the rôle of the flapper's guardian in the best manner of a Vaughan Glaser stock company lead and drops scene after scene by loading it down with histrionics. The men in the company are a sorry lot, save perhaps Mr. John Cromwell who, for all his *dégradé* 42nd Street Piccadilly mien, gets along fairly well in the conventional rôle of the philanderer who lives, with the conventional discreet Jap servant, the conventional shelves of dummy books and the conventional two

champagne glasses, in the lamp-lighted set used last season by the producer in a play called "The Ruined Lady."

#### IV

CHANGE the names of the seven characters to Professor Fuller Hopps, Notter Bum, M. T. Noodle, Sheeza Pippin, Ima Peach, Helen B. Ware and Lotta Pepp, change the name of the butler from Allan to Bozo, give the women a few gold teeth apiece, dress them in tights, and add a few musical numbers in which they successively represent jockeys, dolls and English chappies and—without altering a single line of the dialogue—Wilson Collison's and Avery Hopwood's latest farce, "Getting Gertie's Garter" becomes a typical Fourteenth Street burlesque show. Every sooty joke and piece of stage business familiar to burlesque is included in the exhibit. True to burlesque formula, the comic butler indulges in elaborate peekings over his shoulder at a large blonde fixing her garter; the ingénue pretends to undress behind a screen and throws out, piece by piece, the intimate portions of her wardrobe, the comedian meanwhile delivering himself of appropriately facetious comment; and the French maid places a trinket in her bodice and, with a sudden look of alarm and wild grasping at her middle, smirkingly announces that it is slipping down, down, down . . . There are the jokes on twin beds, the odoriferousness of manure, the esoteric concerns of the wedding night and contraband alcoholic beverages; there is the business of the Amazonian female married to the diminutive man, and of the comedian drinking a bottle of whiskey at a gulp and mistaking an automobile tire for a snake; there is the episode wherein the comique jumps into a barrel to hide and reappears with his face covered with flour.

Although the Messrs. Collison and Hopwood have been devoting themselves for the last four years to this stratagem of fitting out the old-time burlesque shows with costly scenery

and expensive actors and presenting the result as three dollar farce, they have never gone quite so far with the device as in the present instance. And, what is more, they have never done their job quite so audaciously or amateurishly. Although it is true that they have stopped a few paces short of the "Kama Sutra," they have gone farther in the matter of smoking-car humour than any American playwrights have gone before, and in the process have pounded double entente to a pulp. Hopwood's erstwhile Parisian touch is nowhere evident; the smut is played on cornets. And the general impression, for all the three or four honest loud laughs in the show, is of a desperate effort to make a commercial success of a dubious theatrical investment by throwing reserve to the winds and making the lines as raw as possible.

The effect of a farce of this kind reinforces my long-held belief, often set forth in this place, that outright adultery, as the French farcically employ it, would be not nearly so objectionable to American morals as the euphemistic substitutes and sexual false-faces currently in vogue. For all the circumstance that such a French farce as, say, Gander's "Le Coucher de la Mariée" or Veber's "Mon Amour Chéri" deals frankly with adultery, it would be less discommodious to the moral sense of an American audience than such a farce as the one under discussion, since a moral sense of the species that we encounter locally is ever offended less by literary saltpetre than by literary cantharides. Against which type of novel, for example, do the professional moralists most often bend their energies: the novel of consummated adultery or the novel of cunningly deferred adultery? Against

which type of play, further, do they direct their efforts: the play of outright adultery, like "Iris" or "Hindle Wakes," or the play of craftily pre-saged but sedulously sidestepped adultery, like "The Girl with the Whooping Cough" or "Pretty Soft"? It was not adultery that set the moralists upon Cabell's "Jurgen," but the double entente. It was not the adultery that set them upon Dreiser's "The 'Genius,'" but the episodes leading up to the adultery.

The Collison-Hopwood farce is vociferously over-acted by Miss Hazel Dawn, who seems lost without an orchestra leader's baton; by Miss Dorothy Mackaye, who appears not to have made up her mind whether it were more profitable to imitate the technic of Madge Kennedy, May Vokes or Frank Tinney; and by Mr. Walter Jones who somehow contrives to be amusing despite his confusion of the methods of farce and boiler-making.

## V

"HONORS ARE EVEN," by Roi Cooper Megrue, is squashy-footed comedy rich in platitude and sentimental doggerel. "March Hares," by Harry W. Gribble, is an amusing and imaginative fantastic farce comedy very much above the Broadway level. Of this play and its author, more anon. "Dulcy," by George S. Kaufman and Marc Connelly, is fresh and diverting tomfoolery; of this, also more anon. "Sonya," an adaptation from the Polish of Gabryela Zapolska, author of the Continental success, "The Morals of Madame Dolska," is another reboiling of the bones of "Old Heidelberg." It is poor stuff. "The Night-Cap," by Max Marcin and Guy Bolton, is mystery farce patterned after "The Bat." It suffers from imitativeness.



# Notes on Books

By H. L. Mencken

## I

I THINK of all the great and good men who labor so homericly, week in and week out, to lift up the art of letters and establish a sound literary taste in America—the assiduous Canby at work all night down there in his Vesey Street cage, with young Benét passing him the instruments; Hackett sweating and puffing in the blast-furnaces of the *New Republic*, down near the docks; Van Wyck Brooks wearing out his soul and his gizzard in the literary rolling-mills of the *Freeman*; Van Doren, still at it long after midnight, calling piteously upon God in the den of the *Nation*; Phelps making his cultural rattan whistle through the air at New Haven; Jones and Hansen (not to forget Fanny Butcher) wrestling with the chelonian numskullery of Chicago; Firkins fighting jazz in the *Profiteers' Review*; Lawrence Gilman bawling for all the bozarts in the *North American*; Paul Elmer More moaning unceasingly under the campus pump; De Casseres vivisecting Philistines in *Judge*; Thayer and company eternally at it in the *Dial*; the fair Anderson fighting both Comstockery and Christian Endeavor in the *Little Review*; Sherman pouring out his life-blood for a 100% American æsthetic in Urbana, Ill.; Broun chasing the cheese-mongers and tripe-sellers in the *Tribune*; La Dawson flourishing her fearsome hatpin in the *Globe*; Finger trying to civilize Arkansas in *All's Well*; the New Southerners slitting the throats of Timrod, Coogler and Thomas Nelson Page in the *Double-Dealer* and the *Reviewer*; a vast multitude of other Taines

and Benedetto Croces, great and small, furiously expounding the pure and uplifting gospel, the evangel that will save us, in a host of miscellaneous and far-flung gazettes: the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Vogue*, the *Boston Evening Transcript*, the *Detroit Journal*, the *Baltimore Evening Sunpaper*, the *Bookman*, the *Liberator*, the *Peoria Tageblatt*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Call*, the *Gopher Prairie Tribune*. I add a few names of the living and dead: Louis Untermeyer, Huneker, Harriet Monroe, Braithwaite, Percival Pollard, Brander Matthews, Burton Rascoe, Ernest A. Boyd, John Macy, Randolph Bourne, Harold Stearns, Brownell, Spingarn, Boynton. I add myself: for thirteen consecutive years in eruption in this place, and unfalteringly consecrated to the true, the good, and the beautiful.

And with what result? What great usufruct, imperishably utile to our *Kultur*, has come out of all that agony? Simply this: that the best-selling book in the United States, for at least six weeks past, has been a preposterous piece of rubbish called "The Sheik," by E. M. Hull—a novel so imbecile that, put beside it, even the worst stuff of Harold Bell Wright is literature!

## II

Of the literary manner of this endemic work I choose a specimen from page one. The scene is the verandah of the Biskra Hotel, at Biskra in Algeria. The time is after dinner. Lady Conway *loquitur*:

I thoroughly disapprove of the expedition of which this dance is the inauguration. I consider that even by contemplating such a tour

alone in the desert with no chaperon or attendant of her own sex, with only native camel drivers and servants, Diana Mayo is behaving with a recklessness and impropriety that is calculated to cast a slur not only on her own reputation, but also on the prestige of her country. . . . No opportunity is slight enough for our continental neighbors to cast stones, and this opportunity is very far from being slight. It is the maddest piece of unprincipled folly I have ever heard of.

The style, in brief, of the Right Hon. Arthur James Balfour lying sonorously to the House of Commons: even the terminal preposition is there. The style of the *Times* on Belgian atrocities ten years ago, German atrocities six years ago, Irish atrocities today, and American atrocities tomorrow. But Diana is unmoved by the polysyllables. Not even the expostulations of her brother, Sir Aubrey Mayo, in the manner of an American actor imitating an English actor, can shake her from her wild purpose. Of Sir Aubrey, indeed, she has a generally low opinion, for he is planning to go to America to hunt a wife, and to her all Americans are muffs. "When God made me," she says frankly, "He omitted to give me a heart. I have never loved anyone in my life. My brother and I have tolerated each other, but there has never been any affection between us." Ah, Diana, how you slander God! In a few short weeks you will be— But I anticipate. . . .

Well, next day Diana starts out on her journey. Sir Aubrey, with his excellent valet, Stephen, goes with her for a few versts to stay the gossips, but then he turns back, and she is alone—alone, that is, save for her guide, Mustafa Ali. This Mustafa Ali seems to be a respectable man, but on the second day he begins to show the cloven hoof. Diana wants to camp at a certain small oasis; she is tired of riding and the pigeons in the trees coo seductively; moreover, it is near sundown. But Mustafa Ali professes to be afraid; the place, he says, is full of evil spirits. Very well, they will ride on. But not at the slow pace of the main caravan. Mustafa Ali and she have fleet Arab

steeds. Forward! . . . No doubt you suspect what follows. You are right. The brigands are on them in half an hour, Mustafa Ali pretends to be wounded in the first clash—and presently Diana is looking into "the handsomest and cruellest face that she has ever seen." In the face are two "fierce burning eyes." They "sweep" her until she feels that "the boyish clothes that cover her slender limbs are stripped from her, leaving the beautiful white body bare under his passionate stare." "Who are you?" she gasps hoarsely. "I am the Sheik Ahmed Ben Hassan," answers the scoundrel. "Why have you brought me here?" she demands. "Why have I brought you here?" he replies in excellent French. "*Bon Dieu!* Are you not woman enough to know?"

And so to the villain's tent. His Awful Purpose is now plain to poor Diana, and she wishes heartily that she had listened to Lady Conway and stayed in Biskra. I quote the text (English edition, p. 50):

The flaming light of desire burning in his eyes turned her sick and faint. . . . She writhed in his arms as he crushed her to him in a sudden access of possessive passion. His head bent slowly down to her, his eyes burned deeper, and, held immovable, she endured the first kiss she had ever received. And the touch of his scorching lips, the clasp of his arms, the close union with his warm, strong body robbed her of all strength, of all power of resistance.

But not yet! The scene must be labored a bit, and suitably gilded. He carries her into an adjoining room—his tent, it appears, is almost as large as an apartment-house—and lays her on soft cushions. "Do not make me wait too long," he whispers, and departs to still another room. Then a long page of refined agony. She shivers, trembles, looses a "bitter cry," shudders, clenches her fists frantically, comes to "a complete moral collapse." Then, stealthily, the *Schuft* returns. His eyes are fierce; his stern mouth parts in a cruel smile; in a slow voice, half angry and half amused, he says: "Must I be valet as well as lover?"

The rest I pass over lightly, though in it there is the psychological nub, the bait for women's clubs, the finishing-school-dormitory kernel, of the whole book. For thirty-one days Diana raves and suffers. It is, indeed, a fate to wring the heart; even a Wall Street stockbroker would deprecate it. And then, suddenly, she falls in love with her captor! Yes, violently, madly in love. The discovery appalls her. Is it really possible? Aye, it happens. And when another brigand steals her, and the first one brilliantly rescues her, and is sorely wounded, she falls on her knees at his side. "You won't send me away?" she whispers pleadingly, like a terrified child. "Never!" he replies in good English. "You know the worst of me; you will have a devil for a husband." Enter the estimable rector of the parish—the mullah, or dervish, or whatever it is that the Moslems call him. "I am not afraid," she murmurs ecstatically. "I am not afraid of anything with your arms around me, my desert lover! Ahmed! Monseigneur!" Appendix: it turns out, of course, that he is not an Arab at all, but a 100% Englishman, though his mother was a Spaniard. His father, in fact, is the Earl of Glencaryll. More, the old gentleman has a high blood pressure, and is failing. A year more of this gypsying in the desert, and, barring acts of God and the public enemy, Diana will be Countess of Glencaryll, and all the Americanos she despises will be kissing her hand.

Go buy the book and read it carefully. It is drivel, of course, but it is also a social document of the first importance. After fifty years of frenzied effort by the Comstocks to prevent the presentation of "impure thoughts" to "the minds of persons that are susceptible to impure thoughts," after all that long and furious campaign of extermination against everything likely to "arouse a libidinous passion in the mind of a modest woman" (I quote literally from U. S. vs. Moore, 129 Fed., 160-1, 1904), after the heroic assaults upon "Jurgen," "The 'Genius,'" "Madame

Bovary," "Mlle. de Maupin" and dozens of other honest and dignified books, this is the sort of garbage that is preferred above all other literature by the women of the United States! This is the net product of government by utter damned fools.

### III

I TURN to four good books: "Captain Macdoine's Daughter," by William McFee (*Doubleday*); "Alice Adams," by Booth Tarkington (*Doubleday*); "Erik Dorn," by Ben Hecht (*Putnam*), and "Brass," by Charles G. Norris (*Dutton*). Of the four, the Hecht volume is the most original. Hecht himself, in fact, is a sort of none-such in our literature—a fellow of strange and often startling talents, and yet incurably the dilettante, and too adventurous for solid industry. Four or five years ago he wrote some extraordinary short stories for the *SMART SET*—and some even more extraordinary ones that could not be printed on account of the Comstocks. Then he went over to the *Little Review*, and raged and roared awhile in the manner of Wyndham Lewis and James Stephens. Then he retired from *belles lettres* and devoted himself brilliantly to newspaper reporting in Chicago, where the newspapers seem to prefer *literati* to amateur detectives and ex-oilstock-salesmen, and have employed, at one time or another, such men as Eugene Field, Carl Sandburg, Dreiser and George Ade. The *Daily News* sent him to Germany after the armistice, and he was an eye-witness of the brief Bolshevik revolution in Munich. Wounded by a fragment of *Humpen* during the historic assault upon the Hofbräuhaus, he was invalided home, and decided to write a novel. The result is "Erik Dorn," a curious piece of work indeed—half tale and half rhapsody. I wonder what the newspaper reviewers will make of it. Superficially, it seems to be the story of a young husband's gradual revolt against domestic normalcy; actually it is the chronicle of a sensitive soul's

anomalistic reactions to the whole phantasmagoria of modern civilization—the spiritual knee-jerks of a genuine original. The thing, in spots, is almost unintelligible; the author gropes, but his own ideas seem to elude him. But in other spots it reaches an amazing clarity and brilliancy. What could be more vivid—and intrinsically more true—than the pictures of that astounding buffoonery in the old beer-town on the Isar? Here, at last, a revolution is made comprehensible—and by displaying magnificently its basic nonsensicality. It is sardonic comedy of a type that is seldom encountered in our literature, and it is carried off with the utmost aplomb. In brief, a book full of novelty and challenge—the work of a man who refuses absolutely to fall into a category. . . . But why didn't he read his proofs? Not an umlaut survives!

The Norris and Tarkington stories have solid merit, but each leaves upon me the impression that it might have been done more adeptly. As I pointed out when I reviewed his "Salt," Norris is a follower of Dreiser rather than of his distinguished brother, the late Frank Norris. He shows all of Dreiser's interest in commonplace people, and he has all of Dreiser's insensitiveness to mere manner. Whatever occurs to him, he slaps in—observation, reflection, speculation, moral judgment—and often his story is halted while he turns his drama into a debate. Those debates, it seems to me, are usually dull, and often quite banal. After all, he has nothing new to say—that is, nothing new about his specific subject of monogamous marriage. He shows us marriages that are almost incredibly happy, and marriages that go to pot for reasons that are apparently trivial, but at the end there is no illumination; it remains a mystery, as it is in real life. But in presenting his facts, as opposed to his theories (whatever they are), Norris shows all of the skill that revealed itself in "Salt." Nothing escapes him. He paints the everyday American with truly horrible fidelity, missing not a

single wart, or post-prandial belch, or red spot where the collar rubs. His people live and move—clerks, social pushers, good business men, farmers, neighborhood Bryans, drab wives, chianti Bohemians. Even the children of the tale are alive—an almost unbelievable feat. . . . But, as I say, there is unevenness. The first marriage of Philip Baldwin breaks up a bit too facilely; one mistakes the smash for a mere skirmish, and its consequences thus take on a certain unreality. The second is better managed, but even here there are weak spots. Philip himself, one day a lord of life and the next day ruined, reacts to the disaster out of character; he gives up too readily, and, for a man of his position, is too forlorn and helpless. Norris forgets that such a man has friends, associates, professional colleagues, and that their aid is sufficient to prevent his complete collapse as a going concern. It is here that "Brass" is weakest. It is strongest in the episode of Mrs. Grotenberg—an extra-legal idyl between Philip's two marriages. Here there is the utmost reality, and, what is more, a touch of genuine poetry. Perhaps Norris intends it to say his say about marriage. If so, his doctrine is simple—and sound. The thing that makes Mrs. Grotenberg so charming to Philip as a mistress is the thing that might have made either Marjorie or Leila charming to him as a wife, and that is the simple virtue of amiability. A woman who is naturally amiable has a more potent weapon in the duel of sex than either beauty or brains. She can get any man she wants, and she can hold him after she gets him.

Tarkington's "Alice Adams" is put forward by the publishers, rather idiotically, it seems to me, as a sort of counterblast to the harsh realism of "Main Street." "Some novelists," says a current advertisement of the book, "magnify details; often, in that process, they delve among endless unpleasantries." (A new word, but good. *Nihil obstat! Imprimatur!*) This is surely a poor way to hawk "Alice Adams."

As a matter of fact, the story is a great deal more unpleasant than "Main Street" or even than "Winesburg, Ohio," or even than "Sister Carrie." The gradual disintegration of the Adams family, with the slow subsidence of all of young Alice's hopes, is depicted with an almost fiendish relentlessness; the final scene, grotesque superficially, has undertones of genuine tragedy. What ails it, as a work of art, is what ails most of Tarkington's books. It is a bit too well-made, too direct and flashy, too slick and logical. One half expects a thumping moral to be appended at the end; the moral, in fact, fairly bulges from the story. I have a notion that this too assertive facility is the product of Tarkington's adventures in the popular magazines. He is, at bottom, an artist of very considerable talents, but in learning the trade of manufacturing successful serials he has lost contact with primary reality. We do not see life as a drama, but as a panorama, jerky and often dim. In the garrulous volumes of Dreiser there is vastly more verity than in "Alice Adams." But it has the qualities that go with its defects. Its concrete scenes are beautifully managed; its people are well imagined; it has humor, and is well written. Such books, though imperfect, are not to be sniffed at. They may fall a bit outside the first rank of our current literature, but they certainly stand at the head of the second rank.

"Captain Macedoine's Daughter" is absolutely first-class; I offer it to you as a book superbly imagined and executed, a book almost without a flaw. McFee, I have no doubt, is a passionate admirer of Joseph Conrad. In truth, Conradian juices drip shamelessly from his pages. But is this a crime to bring him into the dock? To me, it seems rather a virtue. Too many of our younger novelists appear to admire, not Conrad, but Hall Caine. (Now Sir Hall Caine: the English never overlook a worthy cheese-monger). At worst, McFee's imitation is anything but slavish. Conrad's flair for the sinister, the

grotesquely horrible, the inordinate and appalling, is not in him. He is a much milder man, and he shows it even when he resorts to Conradian butchery, as in the penultimate scene of "Captain Macedoine's Daughter." But in less troubled moods, he shows an astonishing mastery of the Conradian method, and to its mere mechanics he brings genuine feeling, a sensitive perception of strange beauty, a fine and simple poeticality. The man, in brief, rises enormously above the common run of novelists. He is not a mere spinner of yarns and shockers of dullards; he is a first-rate artist. I shall not describe his book in detail. You will certainly want to read it. If you miss it, you miss the best piece of fiction that has appeared in America since "My Antonia."

#### IV

WHAT one gathers chiefly from such a book as "The Trend of the Race," by Prof. Dr. Samuel J. Holmes, of the University of California (*Harcourt*), is the notion that the new science of eugenics is still based upon a very faulty body of facts, and that most of the practical measures advocated by its practitioners are of extremely dubious utility. All that is unquestionably sound in it, in truth, has been known to animal breeders for countless generations. That a bantam hen and rooster, joined in holy wedlock, will not produce a Leghorn is familiar even to professors in agricultural colleges and the editors of farm papers. That inbreeding tends to exaggerate defects was a commonplace in the time of Gog and Magog. So far, eugenics borrows safely. But when it enters into new regions, it has to resort to mere speculations, and after a while the speculators seem to devote their whole energies to proving one another idiots, which is often easy enough. One day Professor Dr. X. produces his massive evidence, out of an intensive study of the annual reports of the Düsseldorfer Moronsheim, that if an epileptic is crossed with a moron the

offspring will be two moving-picture actors and five members of the Reichstag. The next day Geheimrat Y. demonstrates that all of the professor's figures are based upon statistical fallacies, and that, in point of fact, epileptics and morons often produce poets, philosophers and military geniuses. Every one of Prof. Dr. Holmes' extraordinarily exhaustive and depressing chapters is full of just such disputes. There seems to be no general agreement upon even the elements of the new science, and so it is nonsensical to call it a science at all. Suppose pathologists quarreled over the question whether the *bacillus typhosus* was deleterious to man or beneficial. Who would want to listen to them? In eugenics there are innumerable differences of exactly the same sort. Is insanity inheritable? Has alcohol improved the race or damaged it? Is a low birth-rate a good thing or a bad thing? Is genius an entity that can be inherited, like blue eyes or a pug nose, or is it a complex of so many diverse factors that they can be brought together only fortuitously, and at unpredictable intervals? All these capital questions remain unanswered—that is, simply, unanimously, convincingly. Every anthropometrist, of course, has ready answers to most of them, but always there is another anthropometrist standing by to prove that he is an ass.

The thing that principally concerns eugenics is the improvement of the quality of mankind—the augmentation of the teachable minority. Questions of quantitative conservation are secondary, for there are enough human beings in the world now, and even war and pestilence seem unable to reduce the number. But when the question of quality is raised there are immediate difficulties, for no one is able to tell accurately just what constitutes superiority. We know, of course, what its effects are, but what is the machinery whereby those effects are produced? Is genius a positive character, like dark hair or large teeth, or is it simply an indication of the absence of certain

positive characters? The question is not merely rhetorical; the known facts give it abundant reality. A great deal of evidence, in truth, supports the notion that nature is inimical to genius, and that it is her constant effort to reduce all of humanity to one level—that, say, of a Ford salesman or a subway ticket-chopper. Genius may thus be a sort of disease. Some accident or other, to the sperm cell or to the embryo, may cause the destruction of the elements which work for normalcy, and so the ensuing infant, born with the brakes off, may be a genius—or an idiot. The causes of mental subnormality, in fact, are enshrouded in precisely the same mystery. Is a feeble-minded child one who has inherited a definite poison, or one who has simply missed inheriting the elements which endow the rest of us with a more or less competent intelligence? Is epilepsy like supernumerary teeth, or is it like a deficiency in teeth? Is drunkenness a proof that the drunkard has inherited a soft spot in the brain, or a proof that he has failed to inherit the capacity for regimentation that makes good Presbyterians and docile cannonfodder of the rest of us?

In the case of such complex things as mental ability, the solution of the problem is made almost hopeless by the fact that the elements entering into the thing itself are not clearly determined. If they were, then the Mendelian theory might give us some help. This theory, set going by an obscure Austrian monk, is to the general effect that certain characteristics (the Mendelians call them simply characters) of living organisms are inheritable as a whole, *e.g.*, blueness in a flower, and that some of them are in direct conflict with certain other characters, *e.g.*, blueness vs. whiteness, and that when an individual inherits both, one tends to conceal the other completely. But this concealment is not identical with obliteration. The character thus forced under cover—the Mendelians call it a recessive character—is still there, though unseen, and it often shows itself brilliantly in the next

generation. Here Mendelism supports the immemorial wisdom of the human race. All of us know that a child frequently resembles, not its father or mother, but one of its grandparents, or uncles, or aunts. The explanation is that the characters marking it, transmitted from its paternal grandfather, say, to its father, became recessive in him, but that in the child they were set free by elements received from its mother, and so became dominant, or visible. But what are the characters that enter into mental superiority? Obviously, they must be many and various. A man with a good head, to be of any use to the world, must also have the capacity and inclination to use it: he must be educated, and diligent, and full of curiosity, and somewhat vain, and in good enough health to enable him to think and work. Which of these traits, if any, are genuine Mendelian characters, and what is their general tendency, dominant or recessive? More, how are we to make them more assertively dominant, *i.e.*, how are we to increase the probability that Z., a child to be born next year, will be a genius, or even an individual of more than common horse-sense? This is the capital problem of eugenics, and it remains wholly unsolved.

But the fact that it is not solved by no means argues that it should not be discussed. Such a discussion Prof. Dr. Holmes undertakes in his book, and to the business he brings a truly massive acquaintance with the literature. I wish I could add that his discourse is entertaining, but my Hippocratic oath forces me to report truthfully that he is extraordinarily dull, plodding, blowsy and professorial. He writes, indeed, in the most ghastly manner. But such books must be written, and perhaps in just

that way, in order that all the problems may be clearly set, and all the available evidence decorously assembled. On some later day a man of penetrating mind will tackle that evidence, and knock some sense into it. Then eugenics will begin to be scientific.

## V

SPACE is too short for me to do more than mention a few more serious books. Lytton Strachey's "Queen Victoria" (*Harcourt*) is worth all the praise it has got. So is "The Mirrors of Downing Street," by some anonymous gabbler (*Putnam*). But this same gabbler, in a second volume, "The Glass of Fashion" (*Putnam*), descends to the maudlin. His identity is still a mystery: I cast a vote for the Hon. Stephen Coleridge. "The Mirrors of Washington," by another anonymous (*Putnam*), is quite as good as "Downing Street"—in fact, often better. The sketches of Lodge, Penrose, Borah, Baruch and Root are superb.

Some other books you will find interesting: "The Portrait of Mr. W. H.," by Oscar Wilde (*Kennerley*), a new edition with hitherto unpublished passages; "Decadence," by Remy de Gourmont, of which more anon (*Harcourt*); "The New Society," by Walter Rathenau (*Harcourt*); "Revolution and Democracy," by Frederic C. Howe (*Huebsch*); "The Acquisitive Society," by R. H. Tawney (*Harcourt*); "The Engineers and the Price System," by Thorstein Veblen (*Huebsch*); "Democracy and the Human Equation," by Alleyne Ireland (*Dutton*); "The Fruits of Victory," by Norman Angell (*Century*); "The Life and Times of Ambrose Paré," by Francis R. Packard (*Hoeber*).





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## Good Investments—that's where this lad lived

THIS MAN won't stop.

\* \* \*

AT ANYTHING under.

\* \* \*

A DOLLAR Havana".

\* \* \*

BUT NO, Watson.

\* \* \*

YOU'RE ALL wrong.

\* \* \*

HE SLAPPED down two dimes.

\* \* \*

AND SAID in a loud voice.

\* \* \*

"GIVE ME a package.

\* \* \*

OF THOSE cigarettes.

\* \* \*

THAT SATISFY."

\* \* \*

THEY Satisfy

THEY Satisfy